

California Political Landscape Goes Through Seismic Shifts

Earthquakes are part of life in California, but political earthquakes are less common, occurring on occasion, yet leaving a lasting impact once the aftershocks have ceased.

Here are a few of the aftershocks being felt in California after a tumultuous 2017 that led to the qualification of a recall election for an incumbent Democratic state senator, the resignation of three Democratic members of the Assembly due to either harassment allegations or claims of health challenges, costing the party its super majority status. Rumors of “other shoes to fall” are grist for the Sacramento rumor mills.

At publication time, here is what we know about the 2018 mid-term election in California:

- Of the eight statewide constitutional offices only one incumbent is seeking re-election, State Controller Betty Yee;
- This will be the first election in the post-Proposition 13 era with the Governor’s office open due to term limits;
- Appointed Attorney General Xavier Becerra is running for what would be his first full term;
- All four Board of Equalization seats are open due to incumbents terming out or running for new offices;
- Most statewide races thus far are dominated by Democratic candidates, opening the door to the likelihood that voters in November will be faced with choosing between two office seekers from the same party;
- The grand prize in California, the Governor’s office, will likely have two Democrats squaring off against one another in November as Republicans have failed to coalesce behind a single candidate;
- The final date to file to run for office in California is March 9, 2018 (March 14 if the incumbent doesn’t run), so expect more changes.

Making sense of the sudden shifts in the political landscape is where the California Chamber of Commerce excels. Through our political networks, we are constantly monitoring developments in the races for all major offices in California. Importantly and reflective of the California electorate, we analyze developments and pursue opportunities through a bipartisan approach. We have been equally successful in electing Republicans as well as pro-business Democrats to legislative office over the last three cycles and look forward to continuing this trend in 2018.

The CalChamber’s bipartisan political approach is being noticed. As widely read Sacramento Bee columnist Dan Walters commented in a November 2016 opinion piece: “...the

(moderate) coalition’s ranks were bolstered by several victories in Democrat vs. Democrat clashes.” Walters continued by noting that the Senate “may be developing a mod squad of its own with wins by business-backed Democrats such as Bill Dodd of Napa and Steven Bradford of Gardena.”

Election Landscape

In 2018 there will be six open seats and one June special election in the California Senate. The CalChamber will focus most of its efforts on the upper house in an effort to continue to grow the moderate caucus referenced above, as well as protect the GOP seats where members are terming out.

There are seven open Assembly seats and three of those seats are vacant due to the resignation of the incumbent legislator. The vacant seats are all in Los Angeles County. As members serve two-year terms, voters in districts with the vacant seats will elect representatives to fill out the unexpired term via a special election. Terms expire in November, so candidates for the three vacant seats will also have to run concurrent campaigns in order to serve through 2020. The CalChamber is interviewing candidates for all vacant and open seats, seeking out candidates who are both willing to listen to the concerns of the state’s employer community and who can win.

The CalChamber is closely monitoring the statewide races, having met with just about all the major candidates, including the leading candidates for Governor, Attorney General and the Board of Equalization. What role, if any, the CalChamber plays in these races will depend on the quality of the candidates and whether there is an opportunity for our organization to make an impact on the outcome of the election.

Track Record

The CalChamber will continue to recruit and elect business-friendly candidates to maintain our superb track record of beating job-killing legislative proposals by staying on the task of engaging our political action network. Our focus will remain dedicated to finding and electing candidates from both political parties who possess the courage to stand up to the liberal special interests and reject their philosophy of tax, spend and regulate.

If we are successful with our election strategy, then our opportunities will far outdistance our challenges.

Candidate Recruitment

Although not a political action committee, the Candidate Recruitment and Development Program provides the resources

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CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT/DEVELOPMENT

necessary to build a bench of electable, pro-jobs candidates for state legislative and local office. The CalChamber partners with our local chamber network, as well as state and local member businesses, to ensure the recruitment efforts are bipartisan and locally driven.

The primary component of this program is to identify potential candidates and put them on the path to elective office. The secondary component is training and developing candidates for their positions. The program has successfully recruited numerous local candidates who have won election to state legislative seats.

Political Action Committees (PACs)

The CalChamber's Political Action Network includes three political entities:

- ChamberPAC is a bipartisan political action committee that makes direct contributions to incumbent office holders and select candidates who promote and vote for an agenda of private sector job creation. Contributions to this committee are limited to \$7,300 per year, person, organization or political action committee.

- JobsPAC is an independent expenditure committee, meaning it speaks directly to voters on behalf of the business community to elect pro-jobs candidates. Co-chaired by the CalChamber and the California Manufacturers and Technology Association, JobsPAC may accept contributions in unlimited amounts.

- CalBusPAC is a CalChamber committee formed primarily to support or oppose ballot measures having an impact on the state's business climate. CalBusPAC may accept contributions in unlimited amounts.

CalChamber Position

California's business community is under constant pressure due to the disproportionate influence that special interest and government employee organizations have on the legislative and regulatory process. The CalChamber is committed to standing up for and speaking out on behalf of the state's employer community through political action, our advocacy network, and constant and direct contact with elected officials.



Staff Contact

Martin R. Wilson

Executive Vice President, Public Affairs

martin.wilson@calchamber.com

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