VOLUME 46, NUMBER 17 • MAY 22, 2020

CalChamber

ALERT

# Assembly Committee Moves Job Killer Bills to Next Stage


A job killer bill that will significantly restrict Californians' ability to access home and auto loans by placing onerous burdens on lenders, which will further exacerbate the housing crisis, passed the Assembly Banking and Finance Committee this week.

Also approved by the committee was a second job killer bill that provides for inconsistent enforcement of wage and hour laws by local jurisdictions.

### AB 2501: Burden on Lenders

The lenders bill, **AB 2501 (Limón; D-Santa Barbara)** was added to the California Chamber of Commerce job killer list this week. The bill requires lenders to maintain home and auto loans for an extended length of time with no payments from borrowers. This strain imposed on financial institutions will limit the availability of credit in the future, which will harm our economic recovery.

Specifically, the bill requires financial institutions and financial service businesses to essentially carry mortgage and car payments for at least 180 days after the COVID-19 state of emergency ends, which could be years.

For example, the emergencies declared on November 8, 2018 and October 27, 2019 due to wildfires and

*See Assembly Committee: Page 4*

## Update on Move Toward Business Reopening


California this week revised the readiness criteria for counties to move toward reopening their economies, linking required calculations on number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations to county populations.

With the revisions, more counties were expected to attest that they have met the criteria to move further into the next stage of reopening.

News reports have highlighted the potential for opening shopping malls and dine-in restaurants. For both types of businesses, the state has issued detailed guidance on the steps the businesses should take to protect the safety of their employees and customers.

For example, see the *HRWatchdog* post on "California Guidelines for Reopening Dine-In Restaurants."

Industry-specific guidelines and checklists are available at ***covid19.ca.gov/industry-guidance***.

### Web Resources

The state's one-stop website at ***covid19.ca.gov*** includes links to the latest data on total cases in California, total deaths and number of persons tested, as well as hospital data, county maps, cases by county, and a section allowing visitors to search for a testing site by zip code.

The California Chamber of Commerce webpage at ***www.calchamber.com/coronavirus*** includes links to COVID-19-related federal, state and local resources, including California Counties Health and Stay-at-Home Order pages, plus CalChamber podcasts and other guidance.

## Politics During a Pandemic Leads to Victories for GOP Candidates

**Congressman Mike Garcia**

California held two runoff special elections on May 12 that produced lopsided wins for the Republican candidates in districts where voter registration, at least on paper, has created a Democratic advantage.

**Senator Melissa Melendez**

Mike Garcia of Santa Clarita is the newly minted Republican congressman representing Congressional District 25, which includes portions of Ventura and Los Angeles County.

Garcia defeated Democratic Assemblywoman Christy Smith (Santa Clarita) by 17,000 votes, giving him a winning percentage of 54%. Garcia succeeds Democrat Katie Hill (Agua Dulce), who resigned the seat amid allegations of engaging in an inappropriate relationship with a member of her congressional staff.

Further to the east, the Riverside County Senate District 28 was captured

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## Inside

*Labor Law Corner*

# Factors to Keep in Mind When Rehiring Furloughed Employees

**Dana Leisinger**
**HR Adviser**

*We are gearing up to restart our business soon. We furloughed several employees. Are there any concerns about rehiring? When we furloughed these people, we did not consider it a layoff because we knew we would be rehiring them soon.*

First, many small businesses took advantage of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, put into place by the Small Business Administration, to stay "afloat." These loans will be forgiven if the borrower follows all the rules.

One requirement of that program is that the borrower (employer) must offer to rehire (for the same salary/wages and same number of hours) laid-off employees.

For purposes of loan forgiveness, the borrower must have made a good faith, written offer of rehire. However, if the employee rejects that offer, it must be documented by the borrower. Some employees prefer, for safety or other reasons, to remain at home and not to return to work.

## Other Considerations

There are other factors to consider.

• If the business is unionized, the **collective bargaining agreement** should be reviewed. Wages, hours and working conditions are covered by such agreements, and possibly any concerns about rehiring employees who have been laid off for certain conditions. Those policies need to be reviewed to assure the employer is in compliance with the agreement.

• Also, an employer needs to review its own **internal policies and practices**. Many companies have specified written policies and/or practices on rehiring employees who have been laid off. If that is the case, the employer needs to be consistent with those practices.

Obviously, **rehiring practices need to be nondiscriminatory**. However, absent the circumstances noted above, there are no rehiring practices required by law. An employee who was, for example, on the cusp of being terminated when furloughed is not guaranteed re-employment.

It can be a good idea to review the furloughed employees' disciplinary practices before deciding to re-employ them.

## Safety Procedures

Lastly, it's advisable to let the rehires know about various issues, such as exact dates to return, what might have changed (or not), and new safety procedures. Many business are highly regulated by such safety procedures, such as:

• Handwashing;
• Disinfection of surfaces;
• Continued social distancing;
• Staggered shifts;
• Other industry-specific requirements.

Remember, asking a furloughed employee to return to work is a positive thing. Just remember to follow the proper procedures and keep aware of any local requirements.

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*Column based on questions asked by callers on the Labor Law Helpline, a service to California Chamber of Commerce preferred and executive members. For expert explanations of labor laws and Cal/OSHA regulations, not legal counsel for specific situations, call (800) 348-2262 or submit your question at www.hrcalifornia.com.*



*Alert (ISSN 0882-0929) is published weekly during legislative session with exceptions by California Chamber of Commerce, 1215 K Street, Suite 1400, Sacramento, CA 95814-3918. Subscription price is $50 paid through membership dues.*

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# CalChamber-Sponsored Seminars/Trade Shows

More at *www.calchamber.com/events*.

***Labor Law***

HR Boot Camp. CalChamber. June 12, Walnut Creek; August 21, Pasadena; September 10, Sacramento. (800) 331-8877.

What Businesses Need to Know About the California Consumer Privacy Act. CalChamber. June 18, Webinar. (800) 331-8877.

Leaves of Absence: Making Sense of It All. CalChamber. June 26, San Diego; August 13, Oakland. (800) 331-8877.

California Leaves for Expecting Employees. CalChamber. September 17, Webinar. (800) 331-8877.

***Business Resources***

Summer Outlook: Wildfire Weather, Offshore Wind Events and High Heat Days. California Office of Emergency Services and California Resiliency Alliance. May 26, Webinar. (415) 830-4230.

***International Trade***

Women in Business Series: Getting Business Ready in the Post-COVID World. California International Trade Center and GlobalSF. May 26, Webinar. (562) 938-5290.

Infrastructure Sector Business Opportunities in Peru. U.S. Commercial Service.

*See CalChamber-Sponsored: Page 8*

Next Alert: June 12

*The Workplace*

# COVID-19: What Employers Ask - Part 2


In Episode 70 of The Workplace podcast, CalChamber Executive Vice President and General Counsel Erika Frank and Labor Law Adviser Ellen Savage discuss the most common coronavirus-related questions employers and human resources professionals have been asking the CalChamber's Labor Law Helpline as they prepare to reopen their workplaces.

Below is a condensed summary of the podcast. To hear the full discussion of each topic, visit the time stamps noted in the article below.

## Reducing Hours

***Time discussed: 02:12***

One of the most common questions Savage hears on the Labor Law Helpline is whether employees can be "furloughed" for only a day or two a week in order to cut payroll costs. She explains that such a scenario should be referred to as a "reduction in hours" and not a "furlough." Moreover, reducing hours to cut payroll costs will depend on whether the employee is classified as exempt or nonexempt.

Whereas nonexempt employees are paid by the hour, exempt employees are generally paid their full salary "if they perform any work at all during the week," Savage says. Therefore, a company may save costs by reducing the work hours of nonexempt employees, but not by reducing the work hours of exempt employees.

## Vacation Time

***Time discussed: 04:23***

Callers to the Helpline also want to know whether employees can be required to use their vacation time since business demand is low, Savage tells Frank.

When it comes to nonexempt workers, "employers have the right to control vacation costs by telling employees when to take vacation," she says. There are, however, gray areas when it comes to exempt employees, Savage says.

On the opposite side of the issue, employers have also asked whether they can deny vacation requests during this COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Savage points out that there are essential businesses that have too much demand to be able to accommodate vacation requests at the moment.

She explains that employers are allowed to set up blackout periods and ask that workers not take time off until after the blackout period is over. Savage adds that if an employer establishes a new blackout period, the company's vacation cap should be expanded to accommodate the hours accrued during the blackout period.

## When Employees Don't Return

***Time discussed: 07:58***

As businesses prepare to reopen, the No. 1 question asked at the Helpline is, can an employee refuse to return to work?

Savage explains that someone cannot be forced to return to work, but refusing to return to work may disqualify the person from receiving unemployment benefits.

If, for example, a business has abided by local and state guidelines and is providing adequate employee protections, an employee who refuses to return to work out of a general fear of contracting COVID-19 would not qualify to receive unemployment benefits.

If, however, the business does not have proper protective measures in place, an employee can use the lack of protective measures as a valid reason for not returning to work and will thus be able to claim unemployment benefits.

Savage also explains that an employee who earns more on unemployment cannot use the higher pay as a valid reason for refusing to return to work and would not qualify for unemployment benefits.

## Hiring Employees Back

***Time discussed: 15:44***

If hiring an employee back, Savage recommends that if there have been changes to the company's employee handbook or if the employee no longer has the employee handbook, that a new handbook be given. Employers should also review their new hire checklist to determine what documents the employee will need to re-sign.

While employees may not need to re-sign all employment documents, employers should fill out the I-9 form, Section 3 again, Savage says.

## Temperature Checks at Work

***Time discussed: 19:00***

Before the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, checking employees' temperature was not permitted. Now, however, employers are allowed to do so due to the direct threat COVID-19 has on the workplace, Savage tells Frank.

If checking an employee's temperature, employers should compensate workers for their time, Savage stresses.

If, for example, the work shift starts at 8 a.m., but the employer is asking workers to come to work at 7:30 a.m. to have their temperatures checked, the employer needs to compensate its workers for the additional 30 minutes, she explains.

## Sick Employees

***Time discussed: 22:30***

So, what happens if an employee is sick or has been sick?

Savage explains that an employee can return to work when the person has clearance from a doctor, and has passed the 14-day quarantine that is generally recommended.

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# Assembly Committee Moves Job Killer Bills to Next Stage

*From Page 1*

extreme weather conditions in Ventura County and other counties remain in effect today, long after the fire season has ended. On December 23, 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom terminated more than 70 ongoing states of emergency that had been declared at various times over the last decade, from January 27, 2011 to November 30, 2018.

It is very likely that the state of emergency for COVID-19 will persist long after the shelter-in-place orders are lifted and businesses resume operation. However, even when the 180 days expires, AB 2501 still limits the ability for these institutions to recover any loss payments from the consumer.

Requiring these institutions to potentially go years without receiving payment is a significant burden that will negatively impact financial opportunities for Californians. Given the financial risk this proposal creates for such institutions, there is no question that the institutions will limit the mortgage and auto loans it offers.

There will likely be stricter criteria to qualify, or, higher rates to offset the potential loss these institutions could suffer under AB 2501. This limitation will have a negative impact on the housing market, further exacerbating the housing crisis and creating job loss in the housing industry. It will also unquestionably limit car loans, especially for those with problematic credit history, and will harm both consumers and workers in the auto industry.

## AB 3075: Local Enforcement

**AB 3075 (Lorena Gonzalez; D-San Diego)** allows interference with corporate formation based on arbitrary, unclear and unfair standards. It also is inconsistent with other Labor Code provisions.

The bill also opens the door to chaotic and inconsistent enforcement of wage and hour laws by local jurisdictions by authorizing them to impose their own wage payment requirements as long as they are "at least as stringent" as state law requirements.

The requirements appear to include things like the timing for payment of wages, overtime standards, penalties for violating wage standards and numerous other issues covered by state law.

The bill's provisions would dramatically exacerbate a problem that already exists at the local level—overlapping, inconsistent and contradictory labor standards. These standards already make it very difficult for employers to operate in jurisdictions that have different minimum wage, paid sick leave, "ban the box" and other requirements.

AB 3075 would make employer difficulties exponentially worse by extending local jurisdictions' authority to unspecified local labor standards involving "payment of wages."

## Key Votes

The May 19 votes in Assembly Banking and Finance were as follows:

• AB 2501 passed, 7-3:

Ayes: Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda), Cervantes (D-Corona), Gabriel (D-San Fernando Valley), Limón (D-Santa Barbara), Mark Stone (D-Scotts Valley), Weber (D-San Diego), Wicks (D-Oakland).

**Noes: Chen (R-Yorba Linda), Choi (R-Irvine), Fong (R-Bakersfield).**

No Vote Recorded: Burke (D-Inglewood), Grayson (D-Concord).

• AB 3075 passed, 9-3:

Ayes: Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda), Burke (D-Inglewood), Cervantes (D-Corona), Gabriel (D-San Fernando Valley), Grayson (D-Concord), Limón (D-Santa Barbara), Mark Stone (D-Scotts Valley), Weber (D-San Diego), Wicks (D-Oakland).

**Noes: Chen (R-Yorba Linda), Choi (R-Irvine), Fong (R-Bakersfield).**

Both bills will be considered next by the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

## Job Killer Update

• **SB 893 (Caballero; D-Salinas)** has stalled after failing to secure enough votes to pass the Senate Labor, Public Employment and Retirement Committee on May 14. The bill was granted reconsideration.

SB 893 would significantly increase workers' compensation costs for public and private hospitals by presuming that certain diseases (including COVID-19) and injuries are caused by the workplace and establishes an extremely concerning precedent for expanding presumptions into the private sector.

***Key Vote:*** Ayes: 0; **Noes: Hill (D-San Mateo), Morrell (R-Rancho Cucamonga);** No Vote Recorded: Jackson (D-Santa Barbara), Mitchell (D-Los Angeles), Pan (D-Sacramento).

• Due to May 11 amendments, the CalChamber has removed its opposition to **AB 2992 (Weber; D-San Diego)** and it is no longer a job killer.

**Staff Contacts: Jennifer Barrera, Valerie Nera**

# 6 Things Legislature Can Do to Help State Recover from Economic Devastation


**Loren Kaye**

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the California economy, especially public-facing businesses. Entertainment—including motion pictures, television, live shows and theme parks—restaurants, accommodations and retail sectors have been laid waste, evaporating thousands of jobs.

Few states depend on this sector as does California. Tourism, hospitality and retail also are the very sectors that employ workers on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. The supply and service chains that feed into and out of those industries are likewise on the brink. Like a boulder crashing into a lake, the longer this crisis persists, its waves will widen their reach and affect more industries and throw more Californians out of their jobs.

Governor Gavin Newsom has focused on the factors necessary to reopen the economy, including increased testing, contact tracing, availability of personal protective equipment and re-engineered workplaces. More recently the Governor has begun to loosen some of the initial stay-at-home restrictions.

California businesses have volunteered their support in numerous ways, including altering manufacturing operations to produce PPE and other necessary supplies. Restaurants are donating food to vulnerable populations in their communities. Many businesses have continued paying employees' wages and benefits, even though the employees are not working. Employers are finding ways to help out where they can.

Employers have also reworked their operations and made significant changes to the physical environment and work practices, including health screening, personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing, among others, to make employees and consumers feel safe once back in business.

That said, the private sector cannot be the safety net for this crisis; that is the role of government. Instead of imposing new burdens on employers, the key is to alleviate financial pressures so they can recover and rebuild the workforce.

Guest Commentary
By Loren Kaye

## Policies to Boost Recovery

With the Legislature returning to work, state leaders can adopt policies that will boost recovery and mitigate the worst of devastation. Economic recovery and public health should be their exclusive focus in the 2020 session.

• **First, do no more harm.** State leaders should reject new taxes on employers and working Californians and resist new regulatory or statutory mandates.

• **Second, improve liquidity for businesses to buy time for economic recovery.** Lawmakers should conform state tax law to ensure small businesses do not pay taxes on emergency federal assistance, reinstate net operating loss carrybacks to alleviate cash flow burdens on businesses expecting a loss this year, and suspend the requirement to prepay 100% of estimated sales tax liability based on last year's collections.

• **Third, postpone nonessential compliance and rulemaking activities.** Dozens of state agencies are committing regulatory business-as-usual. Instead, they should pause all non-essential state regulatory functions not urgently needed to protect human health and extend the time to implement rules that have not yet taken effect, such as California Consumer Privacy Act regulations.

• **Fourth, eliminate disincentives against telecommuting.** Even when the economy reopens, employers will need to limit the number of people in the workplace. Telecommuting provides that alternative, but employers will only embrace that option if it doesn't lead to liability and frivolous litigation.

Lawmakers should also settle the continuing uncertainty created by AB 5 over independent contractor status for numerous occupations and business conditions, such as enabling workplace protections for freelancers without jeopardizing their status.

• **Fifth, jump-start global tourism marketing** for California once the all-clear is sounded for public gatherings.

• And **sixth, boost economic activity and construction jobs** by streamlining new housing, public infrastructure and commercial developments. Remove incentives to litigate and delay, temporarily pause new mandates on analysis and mitigation of vehicle trip thresholds, and place a cap on development fees for new housing projects.

State and local governments can also improve their guidance to employers on compliance with the many COVID-19 orders. Once the state begins reopening the economy, it should take care to issue clear and concise guidance that reflects operational considerations for the diversity of industries across California. It should also counsel local jurisdictions to conform to state guidance to ensure business re-openings are as uniform as local conditions allow, and that compliance with new orders is easily understood.

Like no time in our modern history, all Californians must pull together to overcome this unprecedented convergence of natural disaster and government-ordered shutdown. Business as usual is not an option.

*Loren Kaye is the president of the California Foundation for Commerce and Education, a think tank affiliated with the California Chamber of Commerce. This guest commentary first appeared on CalMatters.org.*

# Politics During a Pandemic Leads to Victories for GOP Candidates

*From Page 1*

by Republican Assemblywoman Melissa Melendez (Lake Elsinore).

Melendez defeated Democratic school board member Elizabeth Romero by a 20,000-vote margin and a winning percentage of 55%. The seat became vacant when Republican Jeff Stone resigned to accept an appointment from the Trump administration.

Although Senate District 28 was already in GOP hands, voter registration has slipped away from Republicans; current registration is 36% Democrat, 33% Republican and 27% no party preference (NPP).

By executive order of Governor Gavin Newsom, these were vote-by-mail elections where voters received and returned their ballot through the mail, although there were limited locations for in-person voting and ballot drop-offs.

## Campaigning During Pandemic

Campaigning during a pandemic created several logistical problems for candidates, political parties and independent groups engaged in the election.

JobsPAC, the California Chamber of Commerce independent expenditure committee, spearheaded an effort to secure the Senate District 28 seat for Melendez through an innovative virtual field program.

Traditional field efforts involve hiring scores of canvassers to walk precincts to directly engage voters and leave campaign literature at their doors. Understandably, during a pandemic, voters are especially unwilling to open their doors to strangers, which required that we find another way to reach them on behalf of Melendez.


Challenges create opportunities and we quickly learned that voters sheltered in their homes were open to live phone calls, text messages and direct mail giving them timely information about the election.

Our message was simple: Melissa Melendez was supported by business leaders because she had the expertise to rebuild the economy once the shelter in place restrictions were lifted.

The mail took a similar approach with the theme "Vote Safely by Mail," featuring a graphic of medical workers in PPE gear with the caption of "They're doing their part. So can you" by voting on May 12.

JobsPAC employed 40 phone bankers and texters who made a total of 136,000 live phone calls and sent 67,000 text messages over four weeks to a target audience of lower-propensity Republicans and conservative NPP voters.

The special election turnout was higher than expected at 37%, which was only slightly lower than the 44% who voted in the presidential primary on March 3. Republicans turned out a much higher margin than Democrats with 80,000 GOP ballots cast, swamping the Democrats by 13,000 votes. About a quarter of the NPP voters cast ballots.

## Implications for November

Are these results a precursor to some type of GOP wave election in California? That would be a large leap of faith, one you should not put money on.

What we can say is that voters were very engaged and open to backing candidates who were fiscally prudent and problem solvers. Let's hope this is a trend that continues through to November.

**Staff Contact: Martin R. Wilson**

# Paycheck Protection Program Loan Forgiveness Application Available


Last week, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), in consultation with the U.S. Department of the Treasury, released the application for seeking forgiveness of loans granted under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

The PPP was part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) enacted at the end of March to help small businesses weather the economic upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The May 15 news release announcing availability of the loan forgiveness application stated that the SBA would soon issue regulations and guidance to provide further help to borrowers in completing their applications and guidance to lenders about their responsibilities.

According to the news release, small businesses can seek forgiveness of the PPP loan at the conclusion of the eight-week covered period, which begins with the disbursement of their loans.

The detailed instructions provided with the application explain how borrowers are to calculate payroll and nonpayroll costs eligible for forgiveness. Measures described by the release as reducing compliance burdens and simplifying the process for borrowers include:

• Options for borrowers to calculate payroll costs using an "alternative payroll covered period" that aligns with borrowers' regular payroll cycles.

• Flexibility to include eligible payroll and nonpayroll expenses paid or incurred during the eight-week period after borrowers receive their PPP loan.

• Step-by-step instructions on how to perform the calculations required by the CARES Act to confirm eligibility for loan forgiveness.

• Borrower-friendly implementation of statutory exemptions from loan forgiveness reduction based on rehiring by June 30.

• Addition of a new exemption from the loan forgiveness reduction for borrowers who have made a good-faith, written offer to rehire workers that was declined.

For more information, see the SBA/Treasury Department news release, which includes a link to the loan forgiveness application.

The Treasury Department updated its document with frequently asked questions about the PPP this week.

# World Trade Organization at a Crossroads

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

During the May 2020 recognition of World Trade Month, and in the current worldwide political climate where trade policy has risen to a tier one issue, the World Trade Organization (WTO) finds itself at a crossroads.

The current Director General is departing early, so discussions over his successor will provide an opportunity to consider a new beginning for the organization.

Every five years the U.S. Congress has the opportunity to vote on withdrawing from the WTO. This spring 2020, there have been two separate resolutions in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, but they may have run out of time to vote, due to the timetable outlined in the 1994 Uruguay Round Agreements Act.

The Uruguay Round act, together with the 1974 Trade Act, approved U.S. entry into the WTO. The last vote on WTO membership took place in 2005, when the House defeated the withdrawal resolution proposed by then-Representative Bernard Sanders of Vermont by a vote of 338-86. The U.S. Senate has never voted on a withdrawal resolution.

Despite President Donald J. Trump's concerns about the WTO, the administration did not call for withdrawal from the membership organization in the annual Trade Report, but indicated: "Despite the serious challenges facing the World Trade Organization, the United States values the WTO and is working diligently within the organization to find solutions."

At issue is the nonworking dispute settlement mechanism and new rules to counter nonmarket economic practices.

### Impact

The WTO has a positive impact on how California producers of goods and services compete in overseas markets, as well as domestically, which creates jobs and economic growth through expanded international trade and investment. The WTO gives businesses improved access to foreign markets and better rules to ensure that competition with foreign businesses is conducted fairly. Trade liberalization can create new jobs, higher incomes, and economic growth for countries around the world.

California's $3 trillion-plus economy is one of the 10 largest in the world. International-related commerce accounts for approximately one-quarter of the state's economy.

Although trade is a nationally determined policy issue, its impact on California is immense. California exports goods to more than 225 foreign markets around the world.

The WTO, with 164 member nations, is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. At its heart are the WTO agreements, negotiated and signed by the bulk of the world's trading nations and ratified or approved in their parliaments or legislatures.

The ultimate goal of the WTO is to abolish trade barriers around the world so that trade can be totally free. Members have agreed to reduce, over time, the most favored nation (MFN) duty rates to zero—along with abolishing quotas and other nontariff barriers to trade. Currently there are more than 21 agreements dealing with goods, services, investment measures and intellectual property rights.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was created in 1948 to expand economic activity by reducing tariffs and other barriers to trade. The Uruguay Round agreements built on past successes by reducing tariffs by roughly one-third across the board and by expanding the GATT framework to include additional agreements under the newer WTO.

The WTO accounts for more than 98% of world trade. More than 20 governments are currently negotiating or due to negotiate accession to the WTO.

### Departure of Director General / New Beginning

In a sudden announcement on May 14, WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo of Brazil revealed his early departure. Azevêdo said in a statement that he timed his departure, which falls a year before his term formally ends, so a selection process wouldn't distract the WTO's next big ministerial conference that is now likely to be delayed into 2021.

The next major WTO meeting could be a turning point for discussions on the future of the organization. The June 2021 12th Ministerial "M 12" meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held in Kazakhstan.

The discussion will now center on from which continent or region the next Director General should hail. Previous Director General Pascal Lamay was from France. The conversation about the next Director General may well help set the tone and agenda of the membership organization, as well as provide an opportunity for a new beginning.

Regardless, this Geneva-based organization is an important player in global trade. The California Chamber of Commerce, in keeping with long-standing policy, enthusiastically supports free trade worldwide, expansion of international trade and investment, fair and equitable market access for California products abroad and elimination of disincentives that impede the international competitiveness of California business.

**Staff Contact: Susanne T. Stirling**

# CalChamber-Sponsored Seminars/Trade Shows

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May 26, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Women's Global Trade Empowerment Forum. U.S. Commercial Service. May 27–28, Dallas, Texas. (769) 610-1644.

Deemed Exports. International Trade Administration. May 27, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Opportunities in the Cybersecurity Sector in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. U.S. Commercial Service. May 27, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

2020 Foreign Direct Investment Report Release and Panel Discussion. World Trade Center Los Angeles. May 27, Webinar. (213) 236-4853

POSTPONED: Select LA Investment Summit. World Trade Center Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. May 27–28, Los Angeles. (213) 236-4853.

Opportunities in Mexico's Environmental Technologies Industry. U.S. Commercial Service. May 28, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Central America Virtual Conference: Smart Cities/Cybersecurity/ICT. U.S. Commercial Service. May 28, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Inaugural Women's Global Trade Empowerment Forum: Expanding Trade in North America and Beyond. U.S. Commercial Service. May 28, June 11, June 25, July 9, July 23, August 6, Webinar. Email: *Jessica.Gordon@trade.gov* or *Richard.Swanson@trade.gov*.

Trade Americas: Business Opportunities in the Caribbean Region Conference. U.S. Commercial Service. May 31–June 5. Email: *Lesa.Forbes@trade.gov* or *Delia.Valdivia@trade.gov*.

U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement: Qualifying Your Goods (Part 1). U.S. Commercial Service. June 1, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

RESCHEDULED: 2020 SelectUSA Investment Summit. International Trade Administration. June 1–3, Washington, D.C. (800) 424-5249.

Doing Business in the Arabian Gulf. U.S. Commercial Service. June 2, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Exporter Readiness Requirements for Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC)/NIST. International Trade Administration. June 2, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Upcoming ICT Sector Opportunities in Colombia. U.S. Commercial Service. June 2, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Upcoming Infrastructure Projects in Caribbean Region. U.S. Commercial Service. June 3, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement: Documenting Origin (Part 2). U.S. Commercial Service. June 3, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. International Trade Administration. June 4, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Electromobility/Infrastructure Business Opportunities in Chile. U.S. Commercial Service. June 9, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Site Visits, Enforcement Actions and Voluntary Disclosures. International Trade Administration. June 9, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Upcoming Energy Projects in the Caribbean Region. U.S. Commercial Service. June 10, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Brazil's Energy Sector Overview and Opportunities. U.S. Commercial Service. June 17, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.

Panama: Digital Hub of the Americas and a Gateway of Opportunities for U.S. Companies. U.S. Commercial Service. June 18, Webinar. (800) 872-8723.