

ALERT

Governor Dims Reopening, Issues Guidance for Schools



In response to COVID-19 flareups in multiple counties, Governor Gavin Newsom last week

ordered all counties to close indoor operations of certain sectors as of July 13.

In addition, personal care businesses and others in counties on the state [Monitoring List](#) for three consecutive days were required to close unless they could be modified to operate outside or by pick-up.

The monitoring list is a significant factor in the Governor's "[Pandemic](#)

[Plan for Learning and Safe Schools](#)," released on July 17, and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) [framework](#) outlining the conditions under which K–12 schools may reopen for in-person instruction, as well as when to close and revert to distance learning due to COVID-19 infections.

CDPH also released [COVID-19 guidance for schools and school-based programs](#).

Closed Statewide

Ordered to be closed statewide as of July 13 are:

- Dine-in restaurants;

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Panelists Share Insights on Fostering Diversity, Inclusion; Video Available



Fostering diversity and inclusion in the workforce requires strong

intention and difficult conversations, Audra Bohannon, senior client partner at Korn Ferry, advises in a recent [recorded panel](#) discussion released by the California Chamber of Commerce.

More than 1,200 people watched the live panel discussion, [Putting Racial Justice Words Into Action: Best Practices and Strategies for California Businesses](#), held on July 15, which features an esteemed group of experts who lent their expertise on a wide range of issues related to bias, including the ways company leadership can respond to

racism and move the needle on diversity in their organizations; how bias influences decision making, hiring, promotions and retention; and education and training programs to move workers into management.

A recorded video of the panel discussion, and other important resources and tips on diversity are available on the CalChamber's Promoting Equality, Diversity and Opportunity in the Workplace webpage at <https://advocacy.calchamber.com/creating-diversity/>.

Below is a brief summary of the best practices shared during the discussion. Readers are encouraged to view the panel discussion video for a more nuanced and in-depth discussion of these issues and how smaller teams can promote diversity. View the video

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The Workplace COVID-19: Planning for School Closures



In [Episode 80](#) of The Workplace podcast, CalChamber Executive Vice President and General Counsel Erika Frank is joined by

employment law experts Bianca Saad and Matthew Roberts to discuss what leave options are available to employees affected by school closures, and how employers should prepare for school closures during the incoming fall school term.

This podcast was recorded on July 20. Listeners should be aware that given the unpredictability of the COVID-19 crisis, the federal government may alter its relief programs at any time. Information presented in this podcast is accurate as of July 20, 2020.

California Governor Gavin Newsom has announced that most K–12 schools will not reopen in the traditional sense in the fall and students instead will be distance learning, Frank tells listeners.

The closure of schools and childcare centers greatly impacts working families, as many parents will not be able to work typical business hours in order to care for or provide instruction to their children.

Leaves Available

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, parents typically used leave under the

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Labor Law Corner

COVID-19 and a New Hire's Expired Identity Document



Sunny Lee
HR Adviser

We just hired an employee who does not have a current identity document. Her driver license expired on April 1, and she says that she has not been able to renew it due to COVID-19. Can we hire her?

Yes. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a *temporary policy* beginning on May 1, 2020 that allows an identity document with an expiration date on or after March 1, 2020 to be accepted for I-9 purposes.

DHS issued this policy due to COVID-19 closure of offices or reduced services that prevented individuals from renewing documents.

Identity documents for I-9 purposes include a driver license, federal- or state-issued identification card with identifying information and a photograph, or a school identification card with a photograph.

If the employee's identity document expired on or after March 1, 2020, and the document expiration date has been extended by the issuing agency due to COVID-19, then it may be used as a List B document.

Adding Note

The expired document should be entered under Section 2 on the I-9 Form and "COVID-19" should be added to the Additional Information section. Employers also may attach to the I-9 Form a copy of the webpage or other notice indicating that the document has been extended.

The employee has 90 days after the DHS terminates this temporary policy to obtain and present a current document. When the employee obtains a new document, enter the new document's number and expiration date in the Additional Information field, initial and date the change.

Confirm State Extensions

Employers can confirm that a state has automatically extended the expiration date of its state IDs and driver licenses by checking the state motor vehicle administration websites.

Information on the California Department of Motor Vehicles extension for driver licenses may be found at <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/covid-19-relief-information/driver-license-extensions/>.

DHS will continue to monitor the ongoing COVID-19 national emergency and will provide updated guidance as needed. Employers may check for current updates by going to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/temporary-policies-related-covid-19>.

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.

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The Workplace

COVID-19: Enforcing Mask Rules at Work



In **Episode 79** of *The Workplace* podcast, CalChamber Executive Vice President and General Counsel Erika Frank and employment

law expert Jennifer Shaw discuss ways employers can ensure employees comply with state guidelines on masks and social distancing, and continue fostering a healthy workplace.

Ask Why

While wearing a mask in the workplace is not law, it is recommended by local and state authorities, such as the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), that employees wear masks at work and maintain a distance of six feet from one another.

This guidance not only protects customers from the spread of COVID-19, but also helps keep employees healthy and safe in the workplace.

The guidance and orders issued by the CDPH and other government agencies, Shaw tells listeners, is the appropriate reasoning an employer needs to establish a mask and social distancing policy at work.

But what if, Frank asks, an employee is found not wearing a mask?

Shaw says that enforcing mask rules is not about getting people in trouble. As with any other violation, an employer should seek out *why* the worker is not wearing a mask. Is the reason due to a medical condition or is it a political statement?

If the employee chooses not to wear a mask because of a political stance, Shaw recommends that the employer state that the employee is expected to comply with

all of the company's rules and regulations, and that violations are subject to discipline.

"...Employees have to know [that] even though we are getting some mixed messages in the media and there are some political issues out there, when it comes to your workplace, you have to follow the rules that the employer has set for you as long as those are appropriate rules," Shaw says.

Moreover, she continues, the employer should communicate that the rules put into place are to keep all employees safe.

Medical Accommodations

If an employee is not wearing a mask because they have a medical condition, the employer should treat it like any other medical accommodation request, but should keep in mind that this situation, is slightly different due to the direct threat to everyone's health and safety, Shaw explains.

"Just because somebody has a medical condition that precludes them from being able to wear a mask doesn't mean they get to expose...people to the virus," she says.

Should a worker have a medical condition that precludes wearing a mask, employers should find ways to maintain safety, such as allowing the employee to telework or finding other ways to get the employee into the workplace, Shaw says.

Shaw compares the situation to having a service animal. Employees with service animals still have to abide by certain rules. For example, a service dog has to behave and cannot relieve itself at work. Similarly, she says, even though an individual has the right to an accommodation, there are going to be limitations on that, especially given the direct threat that not wearing a mask presents.

Set Reminders

Sometimes, the reason an employee is not wearing a mask is simply because they forgot. At work, people are rushing to finish projects, or have to get up to retrieve a document from the printer, or perhaps are hurrying to attend a customer, Shaw says.

Employers need to have grace, she says, and realize that "people are going to make mistakes occasionally."

Still, it is critical that employers enforce the rules, and they should be transparent about all of the company's expectations, Shaw says.

Employers should also find ways to remind employees of the mask and social distancing requirements. Employers can buy posters and decals to space out six-foot distances or use masking tape to establish an employee's work zone.

Inappropriate Graphics

Now that face masks are more widely available, Frank points out that masks have become the new fashion accessory, and masks might contain logos, designs and messages. Can an employer prohibit masks with certain words, imagery or decals?

Similar to a dress code policy, employers can prohibit masks that contain expletives, inappropriate graphics, or messaging that violates the company's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) policy, Shaw explains.

Although an employer can prohibit masks with messaging altogether, if an employer asks that employees wear only a certain color of mask so that it matches their company's shirt, then the mask becomes a "uniform" requirement, and the employer will have to provide the mask, Shaw explains.

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- Wineries and tasting rooms;
- Movie theaters;
- Family entertainment centers (for example: bowling alleys, miniature golf, batting cages and arcades);
- Zoos and museums;
- Cardrooms.

In addition, bars, brewpubs, breweries and pubs were required to close both indoor and outdoor operations statewide, unless they are offering sit-down, outdoor dine-in meals. Alcohol can be sold only in the same transaction as a meal.

In Monitoring List Counties

As of July 23, the state's monitoring list included the population centers—Southern California, the Central Valley and San Francisco Bay Area—35 of the 58 counties. Of the mid-coast counties, only San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties were not on the monitoring list.

Required to be shut down unless their activities could be modified to operate outside or by pick-up are the following in counties that have remained on the state's [Monitoring List](#) for three consecutive days:

- Gyms and fitness centers;
- Places of worship and cultural ceremonies, like weddings and funerals;
- Offices for non-critical infrastructure sectors;
- Personal care services, like nail salons and body waxing;
- Hair salons and barbershops;

- Shopping malls.

Shops that offer tattoos, piercings and electrolysis may not be operated outdoors and must close.

School Reopening Guidance

Both the Governor's pandemic plan and the CDPH guidance state that schools may not open for in-person instruction until their county has NOT been on the county monitoring list for 14 consecutive days.

Other requirements include:

- **Masks or face coverings** for all staff and students in 3rd grade and above. Face coverings are strongly encouraged for students in 2nd grade and below.

- **Physical distancing:** The CDPH guidance calls for school staff members to maintain physical distance from each other, for teacher and staff desks to be at least 6 feet away from student desks, and for schools to consider ways to establish separation of students through means such as 6 feet between desks, markings on classroom floors to promote distancing or "arranging desks in a way that minimizes face-to-face contact."

- **Health screening for staff and students** entering the school and sending home those showing a fever or other symptoms. If someone the staff members or students live with has been diagnosed with COVID-19, staff and students should stay home. Schools should develop policies "that encourage sick

staff and students to stay at home without fear of reprisal," and make sure that staff, students and students' families are aware of the policies, according to the guidance document.

- **Establish a written, site-specific COVID-19 prevention plan** and develop a plan for the possibility of repeated closures of classes, groups or entire facilities when persons associated with the facility or in the community become ill with COVID-19.

- **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces at school and on school buses at least daily.

Staff Testing

The CDPH recommends that once schools are open to in-person instruction the staff in every California school be tested for COVID-19 periodically "as testing capacity permits and as practicable," depending on local disease trends.

The state will provide resources and technical assistance for COVID-19 investigations in school settings, according to the Governor's news release.

More Information

The framework and overview are presented in the [CDPH document](#).

Detailed guidance is presented in the *COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Schools and School-Based Programs* at <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools.pdf> from the CDPH and Cal/OSHA.

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"So don't get too specific about the color or the style or the design," she says. "But you are allowed to say...nothing with a printed message, nothing with an inappropriate graphic or logo or screen print on it."

In other words, Frank says, it's back to the basics, "taking COVID out and going back to the basics of what would you do in this circumstance to try to solve the puzzle."

Shaw recommends employers exercise common sense and remember "our point is workplace safety; we're trying to

keep people safe and healthy." If employers think about that as being the goal, it helps with what steps they actually take.

CalChamber Resources

CalChamber has placed a special emphasis on informing its members and the public about the need for masks and physical distancing in all workplaces and businesses across the state so we can keep California open. The Keep California Open, Six Feet and a Mask campaign is now highlighted on CalChamber's COVID-19 resource page at www.calchamber.com/coronavirus.

Since the crisis began, CalChamber has [compiled important COVID-19 information](#) for employers on the page so they can easily stay up to date on new developments.

In addition, to help our members comply with mask and physical distancing orders and to keep employees and customers informed during the ongoing crisis, the CalChamber is also [offering a variety of posters and floor decals](#) for purchase. The items are available at the [CalChamber Store](#).

California Interstate System Ranks High for Congestion/Road Deterioration Rate



Infrastructure

The rate of congestion, road and bridge deterioration in the California Interstate system is among the highest in the country, according to a report released last week.

The report, *Restoring the Interstate Highway System: Meeting America's Transportation Needs with a Reliable, Safe & Well-Maintained National Highway Network*, looks at the U.S. Interstate system's use, condition and benefits, and the findings of a 2019 report prepared by the [Transportation Research Board \(TRB\)](#), at the request of Congress as part of the [Fixing America's Surface Transportation \(FAST\) Act](#), on the condition and use of the Interstate system and on actions required to restore and upgrade it.

The report shows that the national Interstate system has a persistent and growing backlog of physical and operational deficiencies as a result of age, heavy use and deferred reinvestment, and needs major reconstruction and modernization. The conclusion: annual investment in the nation's Interstate Highway System should be increased approximately two-and-a-half times, from \$23 billion in 2018 to \$57 billion annually over the next 20 years.

"Investing in our transportation infrastructure is a win-win," said Allan Zaremberg, president and CEO of the

California Chamber of Commerce. "It will get essential products to Californians and allow people to travel to work and school in a safer environment while providing much-needed jobs to improve California's economy. California's transportation infrastructure is the backbone of our economy."

California

The report ranks state Interstate systems based on traffic congestion; increase in vehicle miles of travel (VMT) since 2000; share of commercial trucks carried; share of pavement in poor condition; bridges in poor/structurally deficient condition; and fatality rates.

On those metrics, California ranked No. 1 for most congested, No. 9 for poor condition of pavement, and No. 11 for bridges being in poor/structurally deficient condition.

Since 2000, travel on the U.S. Interstate system, the importance of which has been heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, has increased at a rate nearly triple that at which new lane capacity is being added.

In California, 86% of urban Interstate highways are considered congested during peak hours, the greatest share in the U.S., the report shows. Vehicle travel on California's Interstates increased 17% from 2000 to 2018. Eight percent of Interstate travel in California is by combination trucks.

The design of the Interstate—which includes a separation from other roads and rail lines, a minimum of four lanes,

paved shoulders and median barriers—makes California's Interstates twice as safe to travel on as all other roadways.

The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel on California's Interstate in 2018 was 0.58, compared to 1.18 on the state's non-Interstate routes, according to the report.

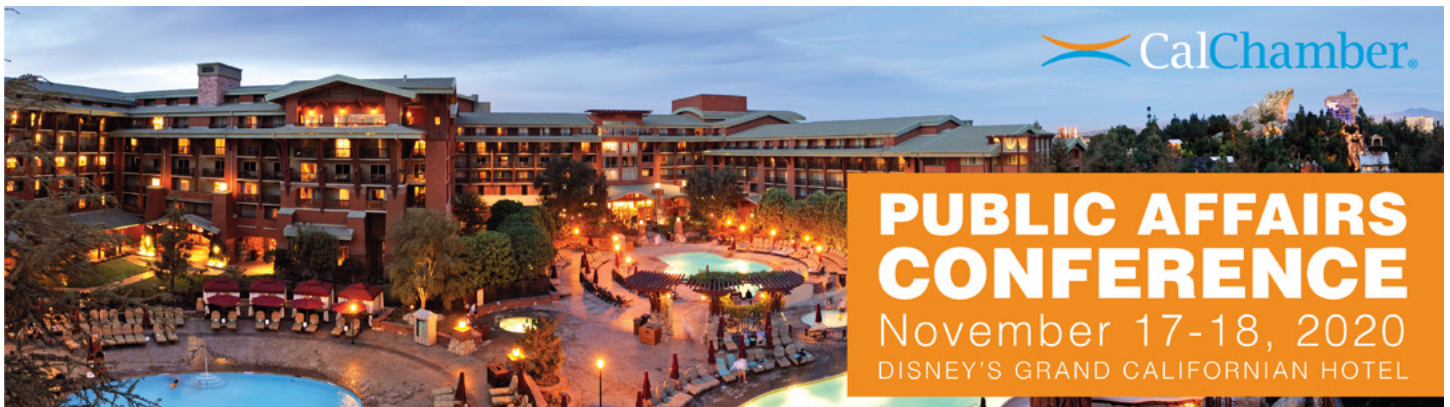
Funding Decreasing

Allocating funding to the state's and nation's infrastructure is critical at the moment, the report points out, as the system faces a double whammy of decreased revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the expiration of the [FAST Act](#).

The FAST Act is the primary source of revenue for the Interstate Highway System and is used by states to fund transportation infrastructure planning and investment. The FAST Act is set to end on September 30, 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic also has affected states' abilities to pay for infrastructure repair.

"The ability of states to invest in Interstate highway repairs and improvements may be hampered by the tremendous decrease in vehicle travel that has occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials estimates will reduce state transportation revenues by at least 30 percent—approximately \$50 billion—over the next 18 months," the report states.



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California School Activities Leave law to cover child- and school-related emergencies and activities, Saad says.

The leave applies to businesses with 25 or more employees working at the same location, and provides 40 hours of unpaid leave a year. The law limits taking no more than eight hours of the leave a month, but that limit does not apply in emergencies, she explains.

Before federal options were put into place, this is the leave that most parents used when schools first began to close due to the pandemic, Saad tells Frank.

In response to COVID-19 closures, the federal government created two paid leave programs under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA): the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSL) and Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLA), Roberts explains.

The leave programs help employers with fewer than 500 employees keep their workforce on their payroll by providing a tax credit to reimburse any leave taken by employees, he says.

The EPSL provides up to 80 hours of paid leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay when the leave is used for childcare-related reasons, while the EFMLA provides up to 10 weeks of paid leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay.

The FFCRA was created at a time when most schools across the country were closing due to the pandemic, but there was no anticipation of the closures continuing in the fall, and employees who used the FFCRA in the spring are now in a sticky situation.

Under current law, if an employee has used up all of their FFCRA time during the spring school term, the employee will not be able to use the FFCRA in the fall because they've used up all of their allotment, Roberts says.

"[The EPSL] only provided for those two weeks; it didn't provide two weeks for each occurrence of the school closure...so once those two weeks are up, they're up," he explains.

And the same goes for the EFMLA, he says.

Employers: Create a Workforce Plan

Due to the limitations of the FFCRA, Frank says, employers should expect to see a number of peculiar situations in the fall. Employers will have some employees who will have leave still available under the FFCRA and others who will have no more time left in their bank.

Employers should take this time to be creative and create a game plan for those employees who need time off due to school closures, but cannot access leave under the FFCRA, Saad says.

Frank suggests that employers assess their workforce now and determine which employees will be impacted by school closures and what types of working arrangements might work for them. For example, creating an alternate work schedule might be easier for exempt employees and trickier for nonexempt employees.

Some ideas suggested by Saad, Roberts and Frank, include offering:

- Unpaid leave;
- Alternate shifts or hours;
- The ability to work remotely; and/or
- A reduced schedule.

Employers should be sure to create a long-term plan, Roberts advises. He points out that if a county is placed on the Governor's monitoring list, school closures would not only last for the duration that the county is put on the list, but for an additional 14 days after the county is removed from the list.

"...we are looking at a long-term planning situation, which is where that creativity and flexibility comes into place," Roberts says.

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Panelists Share Insights on Fostering Diversity, Inclusion; Video Available

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at: <https://www.calchamber.com/webinars/20200715-words-into-action>.

Cassandra Pye

Cassandra Pye, executive vice president and chief strategy officer for Lucas Public Affairs, moderates the panel and kicks off the discussion by sharing four best practices employers can employ today:

- **Educate yourself and your team:**

From books to podcasts to movies, there is a variety of free resources people can turn to for education on race and diversity. The first step is to learn about the issue. For a list of recommended books, please visit the bottom of this article.

- **Look at the company numbers:**

Employers should take a hard look at who the company is hiring and who is being promoted, and look for patterns and potential problems.

- **Assess your leadership team:**

Does your leadership team look like the communities your business serves? Are employees in leadership positions given bonuses for trying to foster diversity in the workplace or are they simply maintaining the status quo?

- **Understand the role of bias:**

Similar to the first step above, education is key. It's important to learn about what bias and all the different forms of bias are. Employers may find that conscious bias, unconscious bias, racial bias, or implicit bias may be driving a lot of the decision making in their organization.

Jonathan Mayes

Jonathan Mayes, senior vice president of external affairs and chief diversity officer at Albertsons and member of the CalChamber Board of Directors, touched

on the role bias has on the decisions we make in our everyday lives and at work.

On their next hiring round, Mayes recommends that employers look for talent in different places, search more broadly and “be intentional as you think about who you’re going to hire and who you’re going to be promoting into roles.”

Mayes shared other tips and thoughts on fostering workplace diversity last month when he joined CalChamber President and CEO Allan Zaremborg on an episode of The Workplace podcast. Listen to the episode at: <https://advocacy.calchamber.com/2020/06/30/tips-for-fostering-workplace-diversity/>.

Audra Bohannon

Audra Bohannon advises employers to have courageous conversations and cautions that employers should be prepared for uncomfortable and awkward moments because conversations about race make people uncomfortable. She says that it’s OK to having those feelings but that it’s important to not stop moving.

She recommends that employers take a hard look at each of their departments and leadership teams and succession plans. Employers should then consider ways they can create mobility and mentorship opportunities for “everyone, not just the select few.”

Moreover, she stresses, it’s critical that just as employers dedicate resources to hiring a diverse talent pool, they should also invest in onboarding programs to help new hires succeed in their new positions.

Bohannon points out that many businesses have made efforts to hire more women in leadership positions, and that the process can also work for any other group.

“[The process]...is just going to be a little more challenging because you’re dealing with race...but it can be done if you’re serious,” she says.

Leland Jourdan

Leland Jourdan, chief diversity officer for Chevron Corporation, stresses the importance of educating oneself and being proactively anti-racist, not just intolerant of racism when one sees it.

For businesses looking for a talent pool, he suggests that employers turn to universities with ethnically diverse students. In this way, businesses can bring in employees with diverse backgrounds, thinking and talent.

Once employees are onboard, he advises, “make sure they have a community to connect to...something that makes people feel like they belong.” Employee networks can be based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, hobbies and more, he says.

Resources Mentioned

During the discussion, panelists recommend a variety of resources that listeners can turn to in order to learn more about bias and racism in the United States. They are:

Books

- *White Rage* – Carol Anderson;
- *White Fragility* – Robin DiAngelo;
- *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* – Mahzarin R. Banaji & Anthony G. Greenwald; and
- *The Authenticity Principle* – Ritu Bhasin.

Video

- Holy Post – Race in America – by Phil Vischer. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGUwcs9qJXY>.



A View from Mexico

Ambassador Recaps Trade Pact Highlights, COVID-19 Impact, State Relationship



The following responses to questions posed by the California Chamber of Commerce are from Ambassador Liliana Ferrer Silva, consul general of Mexico in Sacramento.

Free Trade Agreement

What does the newly implemented U.S.-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement mean for Mexico?

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is set to give continuity to and modernize the previously existing North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), adapting it to the new needs of the 21st century economy.

The new agreement seeks to foster a more integrated and sustainable regional trade by strengthening North America's value chains and increasing our competitiveness globally, a priority set in President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's domestic and international agenda.

In this regard, Mexico's private sector is confident that the USMCA will be an instrument for growth and opportunity, providing certainty and stability to investment and promoting job creation. The USMCA's entry into force effectively positions both Mexico and the United States as global exporters ready to compete in today's international trading system. Mexican businesses aspire for trade between the three countries to grow up to 35% with this new agreement.

The USMCA also creates a more level playing field for Mexican, American and Canadian workers, including improved rules of origin for automobiles, trucks and other products, and benefits Mexico's

rural sector. Farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses alike will be able to modernize and strengthen food and agriculture supply chains trade regionally.

Another highlight of the agreement is the protections provided to Mexican workers with the labor chapter that the USMCA specifically drafted for this purpose. It is the most advanced chapter in any previously negotiated trade agreement. It includes Mexico's, Canada's and the United States' commitment to implement in each of their legislative



Consul General of Mexico in Sacramento, Ambassador Liliana Ferrer Silva

frameworks, workers' protection rights that are internationally recognized and in accordance to what is required by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Mexico took a historic step to comply with the above-mentioned commitment by approving a reform to its domestic Federal Labor Law in May 2019, which grants workers the right to unionized representation, extending labor protections to migrant workers, and added protection to women from discrimination.

With these new labor obligations, that go beyond those negotiated in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Mexico, Canada and the United States have showed a clear intention in improving workers' conditions in the region and compliance with the progressive and effective labor rights agenda, an additional top priority of President López Obrador's administration.

Economic Impact of COVID-19

As countries all over the world feel the pandemic, what is the economic impact of COVID-19 on Mexico?

The COVID-19 pandemic and measures to contain it have generated serious repercussions in the social and economic arena. As most countries, Mexico by implementing the needed precaution and safety measures has experienced a temporary closure of factories, business establishments, recreational venues, corporate offices, tourist headquarters and other productive activities.

In addition, the effects of the pandemic have incurred costs nationwide as reluctance exists on behalf of consumers to engage in activities away from home for fear of contagion, the inability to work of people who are infected with COVID19 and the uncertainty produced from not knowing what

is going to happen in the near, medium and long term, which has caused a drop in both the supply of labor and demand from consumers.

Some industries in Mexico have suffered more than others the effects of COVID-19. Tourism, aviation, and the restaurant and entertainment sectors have been hit particularly hard. Consequently, millions of workers have been laid off

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from their jobs and businesses have ceased to receive revenues due to the lack of economic activity.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the global economy will shrink 3% in 2020, but 5.2% in Latin America and 6.6% in Mexico. On the other hand, the World Trade Organization (WTO) estimates that the effect might be even bigger for international trade. Globally, exports are expected to fall by 16.5% and 12.2% in the case of Mexico.

It is important to note, however, that in order to counteract this economic crisis, Mexico's president has promptly presented an ambitious economic recovery plan that addresses the needs of the most vulnerable communities, as well as those of small and medium-sized businesses, which contribute to 98% of exports and generate 78% of the employment in the country.

Mexico-California Relations

Please describe your thoughts on the unique relationship between Mexico and California.

California is a strategic partner for

Mexico, given the border we share, the size and scope of our bilateral trade, and the relevance of its majority minority Mexican populations.

A close ally and friend to our country, California is home to the largest Mexican-origin community in the United States (12.5 million).

Mexico is both the United States' and California's first trading partner in the world. Being the second largest exporter to Mexico nationwide, today the state's exports account for 17.2% of total exports worldwide. In 2018, California's exports to Mexico reached \$30.7 billion, an increase of \$24.2 billion since 1993.

These numbers are a clear example of the strong partnership that our country has with California and which grew as a result of the economic integration promoted under NAFTA's framework. The USMCA will surely contribute to maintaining this essential and competitive trade relationship.

Mexico, with its 10 consulates in California located from the border city of San Diego to the political capital in Sacramento, in daily coordination with the Mexican Ministry of Foreign

Affairs in Mexico City, has established an effective relationship with state and local authorities. The Consulate General in Sacramento has the privilege of procuring a most valuable relationship with all agencies and Cabinet members of Governor Gavin Newsom's administration.

By the same token, the Sacramento consulate is fortunate to engage in a professional and collaborative relationship with the legislative leadership and members of the State Legislature on both sides of the aisle, as well as with the California State Attorney General's office.

Of special importance is the unique partnership we have built with civil society, nonprofit organizations and state business associations, like the California Chamber of Commerce, who form the backbone of modern citizen diplomacy, essential to the unique and most important California-Mexico relationship.

This question-and-answer article is the first in a series with representatives of California international trade partners.

Staff Contact: Susanne T. Stirling

Face Mask and Safe Distancing Reminders for Your Workplace

 **CalChamber**
HR Expert & Business Advocate™



COVID-19 still remains a very real threat to everyone's health and safety.

Use CalChamber's eye-catching posters and floor decals to remind employees, customers, and visitors to always wear masks and keep at least 6 feet away from each other.

Spread the word to stop the spread of coronavirus. Let's help keep California open for business.

Preferred and Executive members receive their 20 percent member discount.

PURCHASE TODAY at calchamber.com/staysafe or call (800) 331-8877.