

ALERT

Public Affairs Conference

Sell-Out Crowd Explores Weighty Issues in Fun Venue



A sell-out crowd gathered in Anaheim last week for the 2024 California Chamber of

Commerce Public Affairs Conference.

Subjects covered ranged from the mood of California voters, as reflected in this month's election results, to the legislative session just ended and complex issues likely to arise in the coming year.

Comments from attendees showed that they valued the opportunity to connect with their peers as much as the insightful information shared by conference speakers.

New on this year's agenda was a CEO

roundtable discussion led by CalChamber President and CEO Jennifer Barrera, which allowed conference attendees to hear directly from the leaders of associations that often work in concert with the CalChamber.

Among the subjects discussed were the CalChamber-led negotiated reform of the Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) which forestalled an expensive initiative battle, along with defeating ballot measures to raise the minimum wage and supporting measures to establish a permanent funding stream for Medi-Cal and approve the first state school bond measure since 2016.

Association CEOs also discussed their
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Voters Align with CalChamber on Multiple Ballot Measures



The California Chamber of Commerce and California voters agreed

in supporting four November ballot measures and opposing three, according to this week's unofficial vote counts.

• **Proposition 2:** K-12 public schools, community college bond, was passing, 58.5% to 41.5%; CalChamber supported.

The financing plan proposed by Proposition 2 will ensure that the state, local school districts and builders in new growth areas can work together to provide the financing needed to build and improve school facilities throughout the state.

• **Proposition 3:** constitutional right to marriage, was passing, 62.6% to 37.4%; CalChamber supported.

The measure will help ensure all couples have the freedom to marry in California and protect against any future attempts to restrict marriage rights for same-sex or interracial couples.

• **Proposition 5:** 55% voter approval for local infrastructure/housing bonds, was failing, 44.9% yes to 55.1% no; CalChamber opposed.

The proposition proposes making it easier for local governments to approve general obligation bonds, directly increasing operating costs for small and medium-sized businesses, whether they own or

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Photo by Matt Lara

CalChamber Public Affairs Conference attendees had a chance to hear from some of the newly elected legislators on the first day, November 12. From left are Robert Moutrie, CalChamber senior policy advocate (moderator); with Assemblymembers-Elect David Tangipa (R-Fresno), Jessica Caloza (D-Los Angeles), Maggy Krell (D-Sacramento), Alexandra Macedo (R-Tulare), John Harabedian (D-Pasadena), Patrick Ahrens (D-Sunnyvale), Senator-Elect Jesse Arreguin, (D-Berkeley); and Assemblymember-Elect Anamarie Avila Farias (D-Martinez).

Inside

[Key Takeaways from CalChamber Poll: Page 3](#)

*Labor Law Corner***Making Sense of Minimum Wage Requirements**

Erika Barbara
Senior Employment
Law Counsel

With different federal, state, local, and industry-specific minimum wage requirements, how do I know if I am properly paying my California employees?

The first step to compliance is determining which minimum wage applies to your employees.

When it comes to your California employees, you won't have to worry about the federal minimum wage — that's because at \$7.25 per hour, it's substantially less than California's required minimum wage.

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When state and federal law differ, you must follow the law that is more protective of employees. The California state minimum wage is higher, so that is the rate that you must pay employees in California.

California Minimum Wage

California's [minimum wage](#) applies to all non-exempt (or hourly) employees in the state — unless, as discussed below, they are covered by a local ordinance or industry-specific minimum wage. California's minimum wage is currently \$16 per hour and is set to increase to \$16.50 per hour on January 1, 2025.

The November 2024 election gave California voters a chance to weigh in on the state minimum wage with Proposition 32, which voters [rejected](#).

Industry-Specific

You also should confirm whether either of California's [industry-specific minimum wages](#) apply to your employees. Currently, there are separate minimum wage requirements for certain fast food and health care workers.

The minimum wage for fast food workers is \$20 per hour, and the minimum wage for health care workers varies from \$18 to \$23 depending on the type of health care facility in which they work. If your employees are covered by either of these laws, they must be paid the higher, industry-specific minimum wage — not the state minimum wage.

CalChamber-Sponsored Seminars/Trade Shows

More information at www.calchamber.com.
Human Resources

2025 Employment Law Updates.
CalChamber. January 7, 2025, Online; January 9, 2025, Online; January 10, 2025, Online; January 14, 2025, Long Beach; January 16, 2025, Sacramento and Online; January 23, 2025, Online. (800) 331-8877.

International Trade

Mobility Innovations Connecting Japan and the U.S. Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Northern California. December 5, Palo Alto. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

Local Ordinances

It's important also to determine whether your employees work in cities or counties that have [local minimum wage ordinances](#). The ordinances generally apply based on where your employees are working, not where your business is located. So, pay close attention to employees who are working away from your facilities, such as from their home or at client sites.

Once you have confirmed which minimum wage applies to your employees, ensure that employees currently are being paid at least that wage and then increase their pay as needed whenever the minimum wage increases.

Exempt Employees

Lastly, don't forget about your exempt employees. The salary test for the executive, administrative, and professional exemptions is based on the California minimum wage and thus increases when the minimum wage increases. The fast food and health care worker minimum wage laws set a higher salary test for exempt employees so ensure that any exempt employees covered under those laws meet the applicable test.

Column based on questions asked by callers on the Labor Law Helpline, a service to California Chamber of Commerce preferred members and above. 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.

Exim 2025 Annual Conference.

Export-Import Bank of the United States. April 29, 2025–April 30, 2025, Washington, D.C. In-person only. Registration will open later in 2024.
14th World Chambers Congress. World Chambers Congress. September 2, 2025–September 4, 2025, Melbourne, Australia.

Next Alert: December 6

The People's Voice: Annual Poll Outlines Priorities for New Legislature

THE PEOPLE'S VOICE 2024

CalChamber's 10th Annual Survey of California Voter Attitudes

Some key takeaways from this year's CalChamber poll, *The People's*

Voice 2024, include the fact that California voters want more focus on growing jobs in the state, protecting our economy, and prioritizing spending on housing, law enforcement, homelessness, public education and economic development.

Voters like direct democracy through the state's initiative process but remain concerned about costs — including the cost of homeownership and energy policies. Voters remain steadfast in their opposition to new taxes and policies that would advance single-payer health care.

Growing Jobs

More than 90% of voters agree that California needs to do more to attract and retain businesses in the state. This year's poll showed that by a 71% to 12% margin, voters say that “good paying jobs are hard (versus easy) to find,” and a plurality (45%) report that “major employers or businesses have left their community in recent years to relocate to another state (that is, outside California).”

Views on Sacramento Policies

Only 37% of voters agree that the policies from Sacramento have improved their lives, leaving an opportunity for the new Legislature to step in and change outcomes.

Voters were asked to judge the Legislature on how effectively they are spending on various priority programs. Trust was wide-ranging.

Opinions were about evenly split on the effectiveness of wildfire prevention and response and water supply and conservation, while public safety and addressing climate change received 43% approval on effective spending. At the far end of the spectrum was the effectiveness of spending on homelessness, which received overall negative reviews from 85% of voters.

Spending Priorities

In assessing policy priorities in a possibly tight state budget context, voters were asked to select which programs should or should not be protected against cuts.

Top priorities for keeping in place (based on the percentage of those polled choosing them) were programs for housing, law enforcement and homelessness, with economic development and public schools in the next tier. On the other side, voters pointed to benefits for undocumented residents, prisons, courts and climate change programs as lowest priority for spending.

No New Taxes

Finally, the venerable citizens' initiative that stabilized property taxes, Proposition 13 from 1978, continues its nearly five-decade run of popularity — viewed favorably by 85% of voters.

Voters are also highly skeptical of weakening Prop. 13. In 2020, Californians rejected a ballot measure that would have enacted a split roll property tax to raise billions in new taxes on property used by businesses and farmers. It's possible that California voters will consider this measure once again in a future election.

By a 3-to-1 margin, voters want to hold the line on new taxes rather than raise taxes for essential programs.

Light Touch on Regulation

Housing

The cost and availability of housing remains top of mind for Californians, whether homeowners or renters. Voters support several policies that could reduce costs or spur more housing construction:

- 89% support reducing the amount of fees on new housing levied by local governments.
- 79% support limiting litigation over housing projects that have already been approved by local officials.
- 74% support enacting laws such that if a housing project passes all the state's strict building and environmental impact requirements, then local activists and local laws cannot block that project.
- 73% support using tax dollars to increase subsidies for low-income housing and local housing and shelters for homeless individuals and families.
- 69% support reforming regulations that add expensive and time-consuming roadblocks to building new housing units.

Climate Change

Voters generally support the state taking an active role in addressing climate change, but they are concerned

about the cost and impact on their lifestyle. Nearly four out of five voters (79%) believe new policies to reduce carbon emissions are more likely to cause prices and costs in California to increase.

- 84% oppose intentionally designing roads or highways to be more congested to discourage driving.
- 78% oppose new fees for driving gasoline-powered vehicles.
- 71% oppose banning the sale of gasoline-powered vehicles by 2035.
- 68% oppose taxing vehicles based on how many miles they drive.
- 65% oppose phasing out the use of natural gas cooking in homes and restaurants.
- 64% oppose banning construction of new gas stations.
- 62% oppose phasing out the use of natural gas for home heating and water heating.

Artificial Intelligence

The Legislature dove into the artificial intelligence (AI) subject area in 2024, considering more than 50 bills, including some that would have deeply regulated the development of AI models and tools. Voters are clearly aware of this new technology, and since surveyed on it last year, have an increasingly positive attitude about AI.

Asked about the impact that AI will have on their lives over the next few years, 37% of voters indicated it would be positive, versus 29% saying it would be negative. This is a reversal from a year ago, when the answer to the same question was 27%–35%, positive/negative.

Voters similarly reversed their opinion on the effect of AI on their children's lives over the next several decades, with 47% believing it will be positive, and 36% negative.

Health Care

Single-payer health care is an ever-green issue in the Legislature, no matter the partisan tilt in the federal government. With this in mind, 91% of voters report that they are satisfied with their health insurance (asked of those with insurance), and 49% report that they are “very satisfied.”

Among those with private health insurance, 81% respond that they would rather keep their private insurance, as opposed to switching to a government-run single-payer approach.

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Public Affairs Conference: Sell-Out Crowd Explores Weighty Issues

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impressions of how a new federal administration will affect their industries in California.

Conference attendees were able to meet and hear from some of the newly elected legislators, learn from the Governor's legislative affairs secretary, as

well as ponder strategies and outcomes in legislative, congressional and ballot measure campaigns.

A lively post-lunch session on the second day of the conference with journalists Tara Palmeri of Puck News and David Drucker of The Dispatch included a chance for attendees to ask questions

and hear the journalists' interpretation of what happened in the national elections.

Policy issue discussions on day two covered artificial intelligence, antitrust concerns, and California leadership on the transition to clean energy.

More photos on Pages 5-6.



CalChamber President and CEO Jennifer Barrera welcomes attendees to the CalChamber Public Affairs Conference on November 12.



Pollsters Adam Rosenblatt (left), Bold Decision, and Robert Green, Pierrepont Consulting and Analytics LLC, present a recap of The People's Voice survey on California voter attitudes.



Christine Aurre, legislative affairs secretary to Governor Gavin Newsom, and Ben Golombek (moderator), CalChamber executive vice president and chief of staff for policy, following Aurre's comments on working in the Governor's office at the CalChamber Public Affairs Conference on November 12.



(From left) CalChamber President and CEO Jennifer Barrera moderates a discussion with fellow CEOs of industry association partners: Dan Dummoier, California Building Industry Association; Dave Puglia, Western Growers; Tom Bannon, California Apartment Association; Brian Maas, California New Car Dealers Association; and Dustin Corcoran, California Medical Association.



(From left) Rob Stutzman, Stutzman Public Affairs, moderates a review of California votes on legislative and congressional races by Marva Diaz, Diaz Strategies; Kate Holliday, Powers Interactive; David Wilson, Red Dog Vote; and Christy Wilson, Wilson-Callahan Strategies.



Discussing strategies moving forward to responsibly address artificial intelligence (AI) are (from left) CalChamber Policy Advocate Ronak Daylami (moderator), Assemblymember Diane Dixon (R-Newport Beach), Senator Brian Jones (R-Santee), Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (D-Thousand Oaks) and Assemblymember Marc Berman (D-Palo Alto).



(From left) CalChamber Senior Policy Advocate Ashley Hoffman leads a robust discussion on antitrust issues, examining competition versus regulation, with Assemblymember Joe Patterson (R-Rocklin) and Senators Anna Caballero (D-Merced), Steve Glazer (D-Contra Costa) and Thomas Umberg (D-Santa Ana).



From left following what one conference attendee called “an insightful national election post-mortem” are Marty Wilson, CalChamber executive vice president, public affairs; Tara Palmeri, Puck News; Cassandra Pye (moderator), Lucas Public Affairs; and David Drucker, The Dispatch.



Panelists for the discussion on achieving California’s clean energy goals are (from left) Adam Regele (moderator), CalChamber vice president of advocacy and strategic partnerships; Assemblymembers Lisa Calderon (D-Whittier); Sharon Quirk-Silva (D-Fullerton); Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Irvine); Senator Anna Caballero (D-Merced); Assemblymember James Gallagher (R-Nicolas); and Senator Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica).



(From left) CalChamber President and CEO Jennifer Barrera, Courtni Pugh of Hilltop Public Solutions, Jim DeBoo of DeBoo Strategy and Brandon Castillo of BCFS Public Affairs share thoughts on California voters’ response to this year’s propositions.

Voters Align with CalChamber on Multiple Ballot Measures

From Page 1

rent their property. Working class Californians would face increased property taxes as well. The two-thirds vote threshold for approving general obligation bonds has been in place since voters approved the California Constitution in 1879.

• **Proposition 32:** minimum wage increase, was failing, 49.2% yes to 50.8% no; CalChamber opposed.

By a narrow margin, voters recognized that the minimum wage hike results in higher costs for small business employers and consumers. In addition, the minimum wage increase contributes to inflation, adding to the financial pressures faced by families already struggling with rising costs.

• **Proposition 33:** Rent control, was failing, 39.8% yes to 60.2% no; CalChamber opposed.

Voters recognized that restrictive price ceilings reduce the supply of property and that rent control will do nothing to increase the supply of affordable housing. In fact, rent control measures accelerate attrition of the existing stock of rental units in the California marketplace. Studies have shown that local jurisdictions with stringent rent control have lost large numbers of rental units in their markets.

• **Proposition 34:** restricts spending of prescription drug revenues, was passing, 50.8% to 49.2%; CalChamber supported.

Passage of this initiative will prevent the worst abusers of the federal drug

discount program from misusing money intended to help patients by requiring programs to spend at least 98% of their revenue on direct patient care.

• **Proposition 36:** increases penalties for drug and theft crimes, was passing, 68.5% to 31.5%; CalChamber supported.

Increasing penalties will hold criminals accountable and deter future offenses. In addition, the proposition provides mental health and drug treatment services, plus job training for individuals struggling with homelessness, substance abuse or mental illness.

Updated results are posted on the website of the Secretary of State at www.sos.ca.gov. Results will be certified by December 13.

The People's Voice: Annual Poll Outlines Priorities for New Legislature

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Direct Democracy

California voters value direct democracy enabled by initiative and referendum as a balance to legislative actions. By a hefty 6-to-1 (86%–14%) margin, voters favor the ballot measure process that allows California voters to directly create new laws or repeal existing laws.

Methodology

The CalChamber poll was conducted by Bold Decision and Pierrepont Consulting & Analytics with online interviews from November 6–9, 2024, with 1,014 online interviews of California 2024 general election voters. The margin of error for this study is +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. This is the 10th year CalChamber has published *The People's Voice* survey.

Contact: [Loren Kaye](mailto:Loren.Kaye@calchamber.com)

CalChamber Calendar

Women's Leadership Council:

December 12, Monterey.

ChamberPAC Advisory Committee:

December 12, Monterey.

Board of Directors:

December 12–13, Monterey.

International Trade Breakfast:

December 13, Monterey.

Annual Meeting:

December 13, Monterey.



2025 Employment Law Updates

Join our California Employment Law Experts for an in-depth discussion on new California and federal laws, regulations and court decisions.

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