

California Legislature

Elections Happen, Planning for Next Cycle Already Started

Benjamin Franklin is credited with the quote, “In this world nothing is certain except death and taxes.” There likely are other certainties to add to Ben’s list but another one might be: in two years there will be another election. In the case of the California Legislature, every two years the full 80-member Assembly and half of the 40 members of the Senate are on the ballot, which means there are 100 races for the California Legislature every two years. While voters may be breathing a collective sigh of relief that the most recent election is at last over, at CalChamber we are already making plans for the next election.

Both the 2022 and 2024 election cycles were especially consequential for CalChamber and the business community as there were an unprecedented number of open legislative seats. This past cycle alone there were 35 open legislative districts — a full third of the legislative seats were going to have new occupants. As the post-election dust settled, and new and returning members took the oath of office this past December, there are a lot of fresh faces with varying degrees of experience. In the Assembly, 65% of the members have two or fewer years of experience. In the Senate, approximately 30% have served two or fewer years, a smaller number due to a handful of Assembly members moving up to the Senate.

Had the California Chamber of Commerce not had in place a time-honored and robust process for candidate recruitment, many of the newly minted legislators would potentially be unknown to us and our members. Fortunately, that was not the case due in large part to our local chamber network plus our policy and public affairs units, which participated in candidate interviews and vetting as well as helping to marshal the campaign funds needed to support the candidates’ legislative campaigns.



As mentioned above, CalChamber planning for the 2026 election cycle has begun. We already are eyeing 14 legislative seats that will be open due to term limits with six of those in the Senate and eight in the Assembly. This open seat number is sure to grow as incumbent legislators inevitably will seek new electoral opportunities. The CalChamber has a rigorous candidate recruitment process that involves interviews, background research and a thorough understanding of the district to ensure the candidate matches district demographics. This process is completed long before political action committee (PAC) dollars are expended on a race.

CALCHAMBER, LOCAL CHAMBER INVOLVEMENT

Many times, the CalChamber’s introduction to a first-time legislative hopeful comes to us via our local chamber network. This unique and valuable resource provides us with on-the-ground intelligence about the quality of potential candidates and their willingness to work with the business community.

By being equipped with this information in an open legislative district, the CalChamber is in position to make the preliminary judgment on whether to support a candidate. Our local chambers are important partners in this process.

TRACK RECORD

Open legislative districts present the CalChamber with several new opportunities to recruit and elect business-friendly candidates from both political parties. It is through the political process that we can best affect policy outcomes by selecting and electing business-friendly candidates willing to stand with the employer community to defeat job killing legislative proposals. The CalChamber consistently has maintained a better than 90% kill rate on bills given the Job Killer tag.

Our success is attributable to our track record of electing legislators willing to stand up to the public unions and other liberal interests, and to defeat bills that will be harmful to the California economy.

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT

Although not a political action committee, the Candidate Recruitment and Development Program provides the resources necessary to build a bench of electable, pro-jobs candidates for state legislative and local office. The CalChamber partners with our local chamber network, as well as state and local member businesses, to ensure the recruitment efforts are bipartisan and locally driven.

The primary component of this program is to identify potential candidates and put them on the path to elective office. The secondary component is training and developing

candidates for their positions. The program has successfully recruited numerous local candidates who have won election to state legislative seats.

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES (PACS)

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

- **ChamberPAC** is a bipartisan political action committee that makes direct contributions to incumbent office holders and select candidates who promote and vote for an agenda of private sector job creation. Contributions to this committee are limited to \$9,800 annually.

- **JobsPAC** is an independent expenditure committee, meaning it speaks directly to voters on behalf of the business community to elect pro-jobs candidates. JobsPAC may accept contributions in unlimited amounts.

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

CALCHAMBER POSITION

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



Staff Contact

Martin R. Wilson

Executive Vice President, Public Affairs

martin.wilson@calchamber.com

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