

ALERT

PAGA Reforms Already Delivering Positive Results



California's landmark 2024 reforms to the Private Attorneys General Act

(PAGA) are already showing positive results for employers and employees, according to a new report released by four of the state's leading employment law firms.

Read the report [here](#).

Eighteen months after implementation of the reforms, employment law experts report faster settlements, more narrowly focused lawsuits, and greater collaboration between employers and employees.

Early Successes

Key early successes from PAGA reforms include:

- **Employers Doubling Down on Compliance Efforts.** Employers have ramped up their compliance efforts, conducting audits more frequently while training managers and updating policies proactively.
- **Narrower Standing Reduces Frivolous Lawsuits.** Employers and defense lawyers report they are now routinely knocking out claims early by proving the plaintiff didn't experience certain violations, dramatically shrinking expo-

sure. Claims are resolved faster and for less money because legal disputes are narrower and more manageable.

- **More Money & Faster Resolution for Employees.** PAGA reforms increased the employee share of penalties from 25% to 35%, with the state receiving 65%. The early resolution process through the state's Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) also limits the need for extended and costly litigation.

- **Reduced Penalties for Employers.** Reduced penalties now balance fairness with enforcement. Defense firms report significantly reduced penalties on employers because of the PAGA reforms.

- **One-Year Limitations Period.** PAGA reforms clarified standing law that a plaintiff must have experienced a violation within the past year to bring a claim.

- **Ability to Limit the Scope of Claims and Evidence to Ensure Manageability.** Courts now have explicit authority to limit the evidence to be presented at trial or otherwise limit the scope of a PAGA claim to ensure cases remain manageable for trial.

With early data already showing reduced litigation and stronger compliance, California's PAGA reforms are delivering on the promise to improve the system for both employers and employees.

Ninth Circuit Court Pauses Enforcement of Senate Bill 261



This week, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decided to pause enforcement of Senate Bill 261, a climate disclosure law, while a lawsuit filed by the California Chamber of

Commerce and a coalition of business groups remains on appeal.

In response to the court's November 18 ruling, CalChamber issued the following statement:

"We are pleased the court realized the importance of blocking enforcement of [Senate Bill 261](#) while our appeal is pending. California businesses were facing a January 1 date to comply with a law that we believe infringes on their First Amendment rights. Had the court not taken today's action, companies would have been forced to engage in speech that can't be undone.

"We look forward to making our case in the new year, as we believe this law and another related new law ([SB 253](#)) present untenable mandates and a dangerous precedent."

CalChamber joined the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups [in a lawsuit in 2024](#) challenging the two state laws.

The lawsuit asserts that both SB 253 and SB 261 unconstitutionally compel speech in violation of the First Amendment and conflict with existing federal law and the Constitution's delegation to Congress of the power to regulate interstate commerce.

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Cal/OSHA Corner

Personal Protective Equipment Standard Change Mirrors Federal Update



Mel Davis
Workplace Safety
Expert

I understand that there have been changes to the federal standard for the use of personal protective equipment in construction. What was the process and what are the changes for California?

The state Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board (OSHSB), in order to be as effective as federal OSHA, has revised Section 1514 of the Construction Safety Orders, Proper Fit of Personal Protective Equipment in Construction. This standard is substantially the same as the federal standard.

Labor Code Section 147.3(a) (3) exempts the OSHSB from providing a comment period when adopting a standard substantially the same as a federal standard, referred to as a Horcher process.

The Cal/OSHA Standards Board provided a comment period to identify issues related only to the following three areas:

- Any clear and compelling reasons for California to deviate from the federal standards;
- Any issues unique to California related to this proposal that should be addressed in this rulemaking and/or subsequent rulemaking; and
- Solicit comments on the proposed effective date.

The Standards Board saw no reason to deviate from the federal standards.

Revisions

Section 1514, Personal Protective Devices was revised by adding clarifying language in subsection (e). Subsection (e) now states: "Protectors shall be of such design, fit and durability as to provide adequate protection against the hazards for which they are designed. They shall be of safe design, construction, reasonably comfortable and shall not unduly encumber the employee's movements necessary to perform their work."

A new subsection (f) addresses the individual fitting of the personal protective equipment on the employee:

"(f) All personal protective equipment shall be selected to ensure that it properly fits each affected employee."

The changes went into effect on August 21, 2025.

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.

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Human Resources

Simplifying Local Ordinances: Helpful Resources for California Employers. CalChamber. December 4, **Free Webinar**. (800) 331-8877.

An Employer's Playbook for ICE Audits & Workplace Raids. CalChamber. **Webinar on Demand**. (800) 331-8877.

2026 Employment Law Updates. CalChamber. January 8–22, 2026, **Virtual Seminar**. (800) 331-8877.

2026 Employment Law Updates. CalChamber. January 29, 2026, **Webinar**. (800) 331-8877.

California Employers' Guide to AI Decision Making. CalChamber. February 19, 2026, **Webinar**. (800) 331-8877.

HR Boot Camp. CalChamber. February 26–27, April 23–24, June 4–5, September 10–11, 2026, **Virtual Seminar**. (800) 331-8877.

Navigating Paid Sick Leave & Time Off Requests in California. March 5, 2026,

Webinar. (800) 331-8877.

Leaves of Absence. CalChamber. March 26–27, May 7–8, August 6–7, 2026,
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CalChamber Calendar

Women's Leadership Council:

December 4, Yountville

ChamberPAC Advisory Committee:

December 4, Yountville

CalChamber Board of Directors:

December 4–5, Yountville

International Trade Breakfast:

December 5, Yountville

Annual Meeting:

December 5, Yountville

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CalChamber Survey: Affordability Is Top of Mind for Californians

Elected officials need to spend more time on costs and job creation

Photo by Matt Lara



Adam Rosenblatt, Bold Decision, explains results of the 11th Annual CalChamber Survey.

California voters don't think their representatives in Sacramento are spending enough time addressing some of the key issues related to making the state more affordable, according to a survey commissioned by CalChamber.

The survey, conducted last month for

the annual CalChamber Public Affairs Conference, found starkly different views of what voters are hearing about and what they want lawmakers to actually be doing.

"A lot of these things are basic needs," pollster Adam Rosenblatt told attendees of the conference during his presentation on the survey results.

The most mentioned of the seemingly neglected issues was the rising cost of groceries — 91% of voters said elected officials should be spending more time on solving this problem. Close behind, 88% of those surveyed said not enough effort is being made to make the state more affordable for working Californians.

Strong concerns were also raised in the poll by the lack of time being spent on cutting taxes, dealing with costs related to things such as energy and rent, and fixing roads and bridges across the state.

"That's really where the demand is" for action, said Rosenblatt.

Issues related to affordability have remained a concern for voters in the

annual CalChamber poll since 2019. And this year's survey revealed a disconnect — while 57% of voters said they had heard some or a lot about making the state affordable, far fewer believed it was getting the proper attention in the halls of the statehouse.

Those concerns were also voiced in questions asked about job creation in their communities across the state. Sixty-one percent of voters surveyed said few or almost no new jobs are being created — a stunning drop of 29 points (32% saying few or no new jobs) from responses to the same question in 2019.

And who's responsible for that? The poll found that 59% of respondents believed either state or local policies have the greatest impact on job creation in their communities — and most of those people (39%) say local job creation is most affected by what happens in Sacramento.

Foundation Helps Highlight Honor Roll of Top Performing Schools



The Educational Results Partnership (ERP), a nonprofit organization that applies

data science to accelerate student success, has released the 2025 Honor Roll list of California's top performing schools, in partnership with state business leaders, including the California Foundation for Commerce and Education (CFCE).

The Honor Roll list recognizes top performing public schools, school districts and charter schools that have outperformed their peers in closing achievement gaps, particularly among higher-poverty and historically disadvantaged student populations.

This year 1,834 schools and 158 school districts in California made the Honor Roll. This is approximately 21% of all schools and 21% of all districts in the state.

The full list of Honor Roll schools is now posted at <https://www.honorrollschoools.com/lists>.

Last year, about 17% of all schools and 14% of all districts in the state were on the Honor Roll.

National Effort

The program is part of a national effort to engage business leaders in recognizing successful schools and educational systems and to promote the best practices that improve student outcomes.

Honor Roll schools are recognized for demonstrating consistently higher levels of student achievement comprehensively across all student populations, improvement in academic achievement over time, and a reduction in achievement gaps among historically disadvantaged student populations.

Data made publicly available by the California Department of Education for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) for

the years 2023, 2024 and 2025 was used to conduct the analysis. To learn more about the methodology used to determine Honor Roll schools and districts, click the California methodology button at [this link](#).

California Competitiveness

"California's long-term competitiveness depends on a school system that delivers for every student, in every ZIP code," said CFCE President Luis Quiñonez. "When our schools succeed, our communities and our economy succeed. CFCE is proud to help recognize the classrooms that are preparing the next generation of Californians to thrive in a rapidly changing world of work."

"Business leaders are proud to recognize high performing schools that are equipping students with the fundamental skills that matter most to employers," said ERP Board Chair Dan Kinney. "Even as the world and the workforce rapidly change, these schools are helping

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students build strong foundations in critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving—skills that will always be essential in any economy.”

“Many educators across California are already delivering rigorous instruction that equips students with the fundamentals they need to succeed in the workforce and in life,” said ERP Chief Executive Officer James Lanich, Ph.D. “The Honor Roll recognizes that work—identifying schools in a diversity of ZIP codes where students of all backgrounds are mastering the core academic skills that will help them thrive in a rapidly changing world of work.”

Chamber of Commerce Collaborators

The 2025 California Honor Roll Schools list is co-presented in collaboration with the California Foundation for Commerce and Education, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization — 501(c)(3) — affiliated with the California Chamber of Commerce.

Chambers of commerce joining business leaders across the state in co-presenting the list included the California Black, CalAsian, California Hispanic, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento Metro, Sacramento Metro Chamber Foundation, Silicon Valley Central, San

Joaquin A+, Yorba Linda, Pleasanton, Santa Clarita Valley, Inland Empire, Pasadena, San Diego East County Regional, North San Diego, Porterville, Modesto, Fresno, San Gabriel Valley, South County (San Diego), Redlands, Fremont, Encinitas, Carlsbad, Beverly Hills, and Vista.

Longtime Partner

Another longtime ERP partner is the Campaign for Business and Education Excellence (CBEE), which aims to improve economic mobility for the next generation of learners by matching talent to jobs and career opportunities. For more information, visit: edcampaign.org.

CalChamber-Sponsored Seminars/Trade Shows

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[Virtual Seminar](#). (800) 331-8877.

Workplace Violence Prevention Program Tips for 2026. CalChamber. April 16, 2026, [Webinar](#). (800) 331-8877.

Wage & Hour 101: Nonexempt/Hourly Employees. CalChamber. May 21, 2026, [Webinar](#). (800) 331-8877.

Wage & Hour 101: Exempt Employees. CalChamber. June 18, 2026, [Webinar](#). (800) 331-8877.

Supervisor Essentials. CalChamber,

July 16, 2026, [Virtual Seminar](#). (800) 331-8877.

International Trade

Sri Lanka Economic and Investment Summit 2025: Gateway to Growth. The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. December 2–3, Colombo, Sri Lanka. [Register](#).

California Trade Mission: India – Health Tech. Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). January 27–January 31,

2026. Mumbai & New Delhi, India. [Event website](#).

EXIM Annual Conference. Export-Import Bank of the United States. April 29–30, 2026, Washington, D.C. [Registration will open later this year](#).

NADEC Annual Trade Conference: Global Trade and Transition. National Association of District Export Councils. May 12–13, 2026, Nashville, Tennessee. [Event website](#).



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