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When Is a 'Fee' Really a Tax in Disguise?

Use CalChamber Three 'Cs' to Make the Call

As state lawmakers search for solutions to address California's significant projected budget deficit, many in the business community are concerned that tax increase proposals will be on the rise.

Ironically, a proposed legislative tax increase forthrightly identified as a tax increase is not the most threatening type of proposal to taxpayers.

More pernicious is the tax increase proposal that is called a "fee."

Proposition 13 Protection

For tax increases, Proposition 13

established an important taxpayer protection in the California Constitution — a requirement that tax increases be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Legislature.

By contrast, *fee* proposals require only a majority vote for approval, a far easier threshold to meet than two-thirds.

Thus, ensuring that a so-called "fee" is in fact a fee rather than a tax is a crucial analysis that taxpayers ought to conduct for every proposed "fee."

Every year, many legislative proposals See CalChamber: Page 3

Former Clinton Adviser to Speak at Legislative Summit



George Stephanopoulos

George Stephanopoulos, chief Washington correspondent for *ABC News* and former senior adviser to President Bill Clinton, will be a special guest speaker at this year's California Business Legislative Summit on May 20.

This is the 21st anniversary for the day-long California Chamber of Commerce-sponsored event in Sacramento.

Businesspeople from throughout the state are expected to attend the Summit, which provides business and local chamber of commerce leaders a forum to meet with peers and state policy experts and to focus on issues facing California businesses.

George Stephanopoulos

Stephanopoulos currently oversees ABC's coverage of Congress and reports political and policy stories for all ABC platforms. Such platforms include *World News Tonight, Nightline, Good Morning America* and online content. He also is the anchor of ABC's Sunday morning

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New U.S. Law Requires All Economic Sectors to Report Greenhouse Gas Emissions



A federal law passed late last year mandates that facilities in "all sectors of the economy" report greenhouse gas emissions.

Buried deep in fiscal year 2008 appropriations of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of

2008 (H.R. 2764) is a provision requiring the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop and implement rules for nationwide "mandatory reporting of greenhouse gas emissions above appropriate thresholds in all sectors of the economy" by mid-2009.

This provision in the bill reflects what its proponents consider to be a critical first step toward implementing a federal comprehensive greenhouse gas reduction program. The phrase "above appropriate thresholds" suggests the EPA will have to determine which facilities will be required to report greenhouse gas emissions.

California Regulations

The new federal law comes while the California Air Resources Board (CARB) is hard at work developing its own regulations to be implemented by 2012. Those state rules will cap California's statewide greenhouse gas emissions and reduce them to 1990 levels (about 25 percent from current levels) by the year 2020.

Thus far, CARB has put considerable effort toward establishing its own mandatory reporting guidelines using the

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CalChamber Members Promote Wellness: Page 6



Labor Law Corner

Family Leave Now Includes Care for Close Relative in Armed Forces



Susan Kemp Senior Labor Law Counsel

Please explain what our organization needs to do to comply with the new federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) law.

The amendments to the federal FMLA went into effect on January 28. There are two major changes to the law. Because of

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Permission granted to reprint articles if credit is given to the California Chamber of Commerce Alert, and reprint is mailed to Alert at address above

E-mail: alert@calchamber.com. Home page: www.calchamber.com. these amendments, companies may have to provide up to 12 weeks of leave for an employee whose family member will be on active duty, and up to 26 weeks of leave for an employee to care for a family member who has been injured in the line of duty.

As you know, FMLA may be used to care for:

- a newborn child or if a child is placed with your employee for adoption or foster care;
- the spouse, child or parent of your employee, if the spouse, child or parent has a serious health condition; or
- a serious health condition of the employee that means they are unable to perform the functions of their position.

New Reason for Leave

The amendment adds a reason for leave under FMLA for "any qualifying exigency (to be determined by regulations) arising out of the fact that the spouse, son, daughter or parent of an employee is on active duty or notified of impending call or order to active duty in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation."

In addition, the Service Member Family Leave category has been added. It states:

- An eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin of a covered service member shall be entitled to a total of 26 workweeks of leave during a 12-month period to care for the service member.
- During the single 12-month period . . . an eligible employee shall be entitled to a combined total of 26 workweeks of leave

CalChamber Calendar

CalChamber Fundraising Committee:
March 13, La Jolla
Water Committee:
March 13, La Jolla
Board of Directors:
March 13-14, La Jolla
Climate Change Committee:
March 14, La Jolla

Definitions

Next of kin is defined as "nearest blood relative."

A serious illness/injury must be incurred in the line of duty while on active status in the Armed Forces that renders the member medically unfit to perform duties of office, grade, rank or rating.

Because the amended FMLA is a new law, regulations are not yet in place to implement it. If you have an employee who may be eligible for leave under one of these provisions, consult with your legal counsel.

The Labor Law Helpline is 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.

Seminars/Trade Shows

For more information on the seminars listed below, visit www.calchamber. com/events.

International Trade

Exporting to the Global Marketplace. Northern California World Trade Center. February 21 - Sacramento.

Export Management Seminar. Bureau of Industry and Security, U.S. Department of Commerce. February 26-27 - Hawthorne/Manhattan Beach.

International Tax Update. U.S. Council Foundation, Inc. February 27 - East Palo Alto. (512) 457-7013.

Labor Law

HR 201: Labor Law Update. CalChamber. February 26 - Online (90 minutes). (800) 331-8877.

Next Alert: February 29







CalChamber Outlines Three 'Cs' to Help Determine Whether a 'Fee' Is a Tax

From Page 1

labeled as "fees" are actually tax increases. These usually span a wide range of subjects, including transportation, the environment, health care, real estate and telecommunications.

Sometimes, designating a tax as a fee is a strategic attempt to bypass the two-thirds vote requirement. Other times, a wrong or questionable designation of a tax as a fee is due to controversy or confusion over the distinction between taxes and fees.

Landmark Court Decision

Unfortunately, court decisions following passage of Proposition 13 muddled rather than clarified the tax v. fee distinction. One of the landmark decisions that did so was *Sinclair Paint v. State Board of Equalization*, 15 Cal.4th 866 (1997).

At issue in *Sinclair* was a monetary assessment imposed under the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act on manufacturers that were considered to be contributors to environmental lead contamination. Passed by a majority vote of the Legislature, the act created a "fee" to fund health care, research and education programs related to children at risk of lead poisoning.

The California Supreme Court held that the assessment was a fee and not a tax because there was a sufficient connection between it and the adverse effects it was meant to "mitigate." The court broadly held that regulatory agencies can impose fees under their "police power" (rather than the taxing power), including fees to remedy or mitigate societal effects generated by an industry's products.

The California Chamber of Commerce, many taxpayers and others in the business community reacted with concern, stating that the expansiveness and vagueness of the *Sinclair* decision undermined Proposition 13. In the decade since *Sinclair*, controversy over the distinction between taxes v. fees has been ongoing, resurfacing numerous times in the legislative and court arenas.

Three 'Cs' Test

Notwithstanding this ongoing contro-

► How to Tell the Difference			
		Fee	Tax
	No Connection		
	No Cost Match		
	No Controls		V

versy, certain principles from *Sinclair* and other tax v. fee cases can provide guidance for determining whether a monetary assessment or charge is really a tax rather than a fee.

The CalChamber has boiled down these principles into three easy-to-remember "Cs":

• Connection: Is there a reasonable connection or nexus between the proposed assessment and the program or service it is supposed to fund?

In other words, did those who must pay the assessment cause or create the need that the assessment claims to address? Are those individuals who did not cause or create the need specifically exempted?

An illustration of missing causal connection would be a proposed 25-cent surcharge on every beer or wine drink in a restaurant, the proceeds of which would fund law enforcement efforts against alcohol-related crimes. Since not every beer and wine drinker is going to engage in a crime, then even those who didn't create the need for the law enforcement service are funding the service. Thus, the blanket surcharge is likely a tax.

• Cost: Does the amount of the assessment reflect the reasonable cost of providing the government services?

A proposed assessment should not exceed the amount reasonably necessary to cover the costs of the proposed government program. For example, if it costs the government \$20 to perform the service in question, then the fee assessment should not be \$40.

• Controls: *Are there adequate*

controls in place to ensure that program funding is limited to the assessment monies and vice versa — are assessment monies limited to funding the program?

For example, in establishing a program, legislation should specify that the program's sole funding source is the assessment revenue and no other, such as the General Fund. Otherwise, there is no safeguard for connection and cost principles over the life of the program.

Similarly, if there is no explicit prohibition on funneling assessment funds to other programs, the answer to the adequate controls question generally will be "no."

The more "no" answers the analysis shows for the above three "Cs," the more likely the assessment is a tax, even if labeled a fee.

It is important to apply the tax v. fee analysis not only at the state level, but also the local level. Local "fee" proposals can sometimes be more onerous and pervasive, and an improper "fee" designation can mean avoiding the Constitution's requirement that most special taxes be subject to approval by two-thirds of voters.

The threat of a projected \$14.5 billion budget deficit means that "fee" proposals are likely to be more prevalent than ever as state and local policymakers search for new revenue sources. The CalChamber strongly encourages business and other taxpayers to be vigilant about whether any proposed monetary "fee" is in fact a tax and should be subject to Proposition 13's two-thirds vote requirement.

Staff Contact: Kyla Christoffersen



CalChamber Seeking Small Business Advocate Award Nominees

The California Chamber of Commerce has opened nominations for its Small Business Advocate of the Year award.

Nominees should have contributed significantly as an advocate for small business by being involved in such activities as taking leadership roles in or working on state or local ballot measures, testifying before the state Legislature, representing a local chamber of commerce before state government, and being actively involved on federal legislation.

Private sector, for-profit businessper-

sons who have been actively involved in advocacy on state, local or federal issues or political action would be excellent nominees. Chamber executives, government employees and association executives are not eligible.

The application for the award must include a letter of recommendation from a local chamber president or chair of the local chamber board of directors. News articles or other materials may be attached to the application to support the nomination.

Deadline

Award nominations are due to the CalChamber Local Chamber Department by April 4.

The CalChamber will recognize award winners at the California Business Legislative Summit in Sacramento on May 20.

The nomination form is available at *www.calchambervotes.com* or may be requested from the Local Chamber Department at (916) 444-6670.

Former Clinton Adviser to Speak at Legislative Summit

From Page 1 program, This Week with George Stephanopoulos.

As anchor of *This Week*, Stephanopoulos has interviewed members of the Bush administration, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Foreign leaders that have been interviewed by the former Clinton adviser include former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Before joining ABC News in 1997, Stephanopoulos served as the senior adviser to President Clinton for policy and strategy. He also is the author of *All Too Human*, the *New York Times* best seller on President Clinton's first term and the 1992 and 1996 Clinton/Gore campaigns.

Summit Agenda

The Summit agenda will feature a morning introduction from CalChamber President Allan Zaremberg, as well as discussions with noted experts on key policy issues and time to visit with state legislators.

The two objectives of the event are to empower attendees to be active players in the legislative process and to present the business perspective on policy issues affecting the bottom line of California businesses.

State legislators are invited to join their constituents at the Summit luncheon, which also features presentations acknowledging outstanding advocacy by small business owners and local chambers of commerce; the HR Partner of the Year Award; and local chambers that have supported the CalChamber's candidate political action committee, CalChamber-PAC.

Host Committee Events

Summit attendees will have an opportunity to end their day by mingling with their peers and other leaders from business, agriculture, the administration, education and the military, plus state legislators at the Sacramento Host Reception the evening of May 20.

The reception welcomes out-of-town guests to the invitation-only 82nd annual Sacramento Host Breakfast on May 21.

Summit attendees also have the op-

portunity to attend this exclusive event following the Summit. Featured speakers at the breakfast will be Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and CalChamber Board Chair Edwin A. Guiles.

Sacramento business leaders host the annual reception and breakfast to spotlight California's role in national and international commerce. The goal of the Sacramento Host Breakfast is to offer decision-making leaders in California finance, government, education, agriculture and industry the opportunity to exchange views, establish and renew friendships and create statewide atmospheres of good will and understanding at a common table.

Registration

The two-day registration package, including the full-day summit with lunch, the Host Reception and Host Breakfast, is \$220. Other registration options are available. The registration fee increases after April 18.

The deadline to register is May 9. For more information or to register, visit www.calchamber.com.

Staff Contact: Alicia Smith

Mark Your Calendars



California Business Legislative Summit May 20-21, 2008



Court Says Coastal Commission Can Prevent Development

The California Coastal Commission may act on its own to designate an area as environmentally sensitive habitat and, in effect, prevent development, even if there is no certified local coastal program, according to the 2nd Appellate District Court.

In the case of *Douda v. California Coastal Commission*, the court said the commission has the power to unilaterally designate environmentally sensitive habitat areas and thereby prevent development before the certification of a local coastal program.

Commission Power

The court said that the coastal commission has the power to prevent development on property several miles from the ocean on the grounds that the development will impair scenic and visual resources of a coastal zone that extends further inland.

The commission denied the application filed by Milos Douda and Trisha Douda for a coastal development permit to build a home, finding that their property contains an environmentally sensitive habitat area that has not been designated in the Los Angeles County land use plan, and that the proposed development would impair scenic and visual resources.

The commission staff also concluded that the proposed development would prejudice the ability of Los Angeles County to prepare a local coastal program for the Santa Monica Mountains and that the California Environmental Quality Act required less invasive proposals. The commission denied the Doudas' application by a vote of 8-0.

Coastal Act

Under the California Coastal Act of 1976, each local government must either prepare a local coastal program for the

portion of the coastal zone within its jurisdiction, or request that the commission prepare it.

In 1986, Los Angeles County adopted a land use plan for the coastal zone in the Santa Monica Mountains. The commission certified the land use plan. But the commission never approved any implementing ordinances or zoning maps for the land use plans, and Los Angeles County does not have a certified local coastal program in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The land use plan provides for the additional designation of environmentally sensitive habitat areas in unspecific areas through review of regional plant and animal life by an agency issuing a permit. The commission retained permitting authority.

Staff Contact: Valerie Nera

State Study Forecasts Water Supply Shortfall

The reliability of water deliveries through the State Water Project is eroding rapidly and will continue to do so unless the state takes action, according to a newly released report.

Delta pumping restrictions and climate change are two of the most significant changes facing the system, according to the draft report from the state Department of Water Resources (DWR).

Last spring, State Water Project pumps in the Delta were shut down for the first time to protect the Delta smelt. In December 2007, a federal court ruling restricted operations of both the State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project while a new federal biological study for the Delta smelt is written this year.

The report notes that the reduced pumping did not result in an increase in the number of Delta smelt last fall and that another open water fish, the long-fin smelt, also is being considered for listing under the state Endangered Species Act. The two factors mean "a more comprehensive approach to address the decline" in open water fish is needed, according to the report.

Since the DWR report was released, the California Fish and Game Commission has voted to limit pumping from the Delta to protect the long-fin smelt as an endangered species. The commission's February 8 action takes effect later this month and will be in place through August. After then, the limit most likely

will be extended until the adoption of new state/federal rules for pump operation that will incorporate the limits.

A blue-ribbon task force appointed by the Governor has recommended a significant increase in conservation and water efficiency, new facilities to move and store water and likely reductions in the amount of water taken out of the Delta watershed.

The Delta is the source of drinking water for two-thirds of Californians and irrigation water for millions of acres of crops. It also offers vital flood protection for the California Central Valley plains.

DWR is accepting comments on its draft report until March 13. For more information, visit www.water.ca.gov. Staff Contact: Valerie Nera

Make a difference on proposed laws

calchambervotes.com



CalChamber Members Promote Wellness in Workplace



Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness.

The award acknowledges California businesses that are recognizing and promoting workplace wellness through easy-access physical activity and nutrition options.

Honorees are recognized in four categories: Gold, Silver, Bronze and honorable mentions. More than 82 businesses applied for the 2007 award.

Overall, 29 CalChamber members were award winners. The four Gold Award recipients were listed in the November 16, 2007 *Alert*.

Silver Winners

Following are the CalChamber members that received the Silver level of the 2007 California Fit Business Award.

• American Specialty Health. American Specialty Health (ASH) has been consistently recognized for its commitment to promoting health and wellness for employees. In 2004, all the vending machines in the company's San Diego headquarters were restocked with healthy, low calorie foods. ASH also offers employees access to an on-site gym as well as a discounted rate at local fitness clubs.

ASH Chairman/Chief Executive Officer George DeVries and President Bob White challenge their employees in the "Step It Up Challenge." Wearing special pedometers, they push their employees to take as many steps as they do over the course of a month. Employees are eligible to win a \$25 cash award and a specially designed T-shirt for meeting the goal. ASH employee benefits include coaching programs for weight management and tobacco cessation, along with full medical, dental and vision.

The company has more than 600 employees and covers more than 13.4 million members in specialty benefit, fitness and coaching programs.

• Anheuser-Busch, Los Angeles Brewery. This 830-employee brewery's

health program includes an on-site fitness center that offers group classes, an on-site masseuse, Weight Watchers program, a smoking cessation program and healthy food options in the on-site cafeteria. The brewery also offers incentives for employees to receive preventive care from their primary care physician, and a variety of out-of-work activities in which employees can participate. In addition, the company's wellness committee continuously looks for new ways to improve the health and wellness of employees.

• DES Architects + Engineers. DES Architects + Engineers is a 130-person firm located in the San Francisco Bay Area. The firm's "DES Fitness Factor" program has been in existence for more than five years. The program features special activities each quarter, including sponsorship of the biannual Health Air/Blood Drive, in which more than 25 health-related vendors appeared in 2007. DES offers a \$25 per month stipend to all employees for any fitness-related activity, from scuba diving to tae kwon do. The program also includes "Fresh Fruit on Wednesday" day for nine months of the year.

• Kaiser Permanente - Napa Solano Region. The 4,000-employee health care company titled the 2006-07 fiscal year as "Employee Wellness in the Napa-Solano Kaiser Permanente Region." The company formed a wellness committee of health educators, administrators, union leaders, physicians, safety leaders and consultants to focus on employees' well-being.

Kaiser offered only health foods at all facility meetings, as well as 10-minute stretch breaks; opened employee gyms at most facilities free-of-charge; and contracted with local gyms to provide affordable membership rates and ergonomic exams for all employees.

• Kaiser Permanente - North Valley. This branch is the largest service area for Kaiser in Northern California. The health provider enables its staff of 8,925 to be active in managing their health through preventive screening, diet, exercise, disease prevention, maintenance of workplace safety standards and promoting health in a proactive manner. The company's health education department leads the effort by working closely with the public affairs, service training, support food services, occupational

medicine, employee health and workplace safety departments.

The fitness message permeates newsletters, bulletin boards, billboards, weekly e-mails to all employees and an employee wellness website (*www.employeethrive.org*). In addition, healthy food options are available at meetings and at on-site cafeterias and cafes.

Gregory A. Adams, Kaiser Permanente associate regional president and chief operating officer Northern California, is a member of the CalChamber Board of Directors.

• PriMed Consulting/Hill Physicians Medical Group. This 450-employee company launched its corporate wellness program five years ago with the intent to reduce health benefit costs while helping employees achieve a balance between work and lives. The program has since evolved to help employees approach healthy lifestyles.

The company offers employees a \$400 bonus if they are enrolled in the program and meet four of five wellness goals. Goals include: attaining blood pressure values equal to or below 130/80, a Body Mass Index (BMI) under 26, achieving a healthy cholesterol level, exercising 480 minutes or more each month and attending at least one nutrition or stress management event every quarter. In 2007, of the 300 employees enrolled, 151 received the \$400 bonus.

The company dedicates two full days each month to on-site fitness and encourages employees to wear workout attire and participate in one or more of the 30-minute exercise classes held throughout the day to help them achieve their goals. On February 5, PriMed launched a three-month company-wide Biggest Loser contest.

In addition to receiving a California Fit Business Award, the company has received a Fit Company Platinum Award from the American Heart Association.

• Safeway Inc. This food and drug retailer operates 519 stores in California with nearly 65,000 employees. The company encourages employees to eat better by offering healthy alternatives such as low-fat snacks and sugar-free snacks in vending machines. The corporate main campus houses a cafe that offers a variety of healthy food options from sushi to lemon herb chicken salad. Vons, a division

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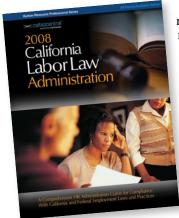


New Labor Law Compliance Book Available from CalChamber

A new book to help California businesses decipher state employment practices is being offered by CalBiz-Central, the source for California business and human resource compliance products, presented by the California Chamber of Commerce.

Created by legal experts, the new 2008 California Labor Law Administration book is a task-based professional's

guide to employment practices, including



recruiting, hiring and performance evaluations, termination, administering leaves of absence and implementing sexual harassment investigations. It includes references to legal authority (case studies).

The 2008 California Labor Law Administration book replaces and expands upon the Recruiting, Performance and Termination book and will help businesses understand how

to comply with and implement laws governing the employment lifecycle.

Using plain language, *California Labor Law Administration* guides employers in developing best practices for wording employment advertisements and performance evaluations.

It also identifies the necessary steps to take when terminating an employee. In addition, businesses receive online access to all featured forms and checklists mentioned in the book.

To order **2008** *California Labor Law Administration*, visit *www.calbizcentral. com* or call (800) 331-8877. CalChamber preferred and executive members receive a 20 percent discount on products.

All Sectors Must Report Greenhouse Gas Emissions Under New U.S. Law

From Page 1

California Climate Action Registry as a base model. Once adopted, these regulations will require all significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions in California to report their annual emissions to CARR

Because this will be the first time that California has collected greenhouse gas emissions data, businesses have voiced a number of concerns, ranging from issues regarding verification to the penalty structure that will be in place. It remains unclear if and how these concerns will be addressed on the federal level for the new reporting program, as well as how the dueling state and federal programs will coexist.

What's Next

Although a final determination has not been made, the "Joint Explanatory Statement" accompanying Congress' appropriations act did suggest that non-compliant entities under the EPA's new federal regulations would be subject to severe monetary penalties.

The California Chamber of Commerce

will be closely monitoring developments on this issue as well as continuing to work actively with CARB on implementation of the state's landmark climate change law, AB 32. The CalChamber will be regularly providing members updates on these issues.

To read more about the CalChamber position on mandatory reporting and related business concerns, see the *Business Issues and Legislative Guide* feature article on "Climate Change" at www.calchamber.com/businessissues.

Staff Contact: Robert Callahan

CalChamber Members Promote Wellness in Workplace

From Page 6

of Safeway, provides a similar in-house selection.

Safeway allows employees time during the day to exercise, take walking breaks or stretch. Safeway's corporate fitness center is professionally staffed by TimeOut Services, a corporate fitness and wellness provider.

The Vons Division office also houses on-site fitness rooms equipped with five treadmills, one stationary bike, two elliptical machines, two televisions, one rowing machine, 12 training machines and other exercise equipment.

Safeway also provides, as part of the non-union benefits plan, many promotional programs, services and classes that promote healthy lifestyles. Employees are allowed access to MedExpert, a medical decision support service that employees can call or e-mail to obtain answers to medical and health questions. In addition, the company's intranet site allows access to information on the Food Guide Pyramid.

Larree M. Renda, executive vice president, chief strategist and administrative officer for Safeway, is second vice chair of the CalChamber.

For more information about the Fit Business Award, visit the task force website at *www.wellnesstaskforce.org*. Applications for the 2008 award will be available March 3 and due June 20.

calchamber.com



Last chance to find out what's new for 2008. Attend HR 201: Labor Law Update Live Web Seminar

In 90 minutes, you will learn the top key laws, regulations and case studies of 2008 that affect how you and your company do business in California. And because it is conducted live over the Internet, you will avoid the hassle of traveling and enjoy learning all you need to know for 2008 from the comfort of your own office. Topics covered include:

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- Discrimination, Retaliation and Supervisor Liability
- Calculating Expense Reimbursements
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- Cases to Watch for in 2008
- And more

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