

CAPITOL UPDATE from the
CFRW Legislative Analysts Desk

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Capitol Update



Issue #17- April 22, 2021

SPECIAL EDITION

Submitted by the CFRW Legislative Analyst Committee:
Gretchen Cox, Elaine Freeman, Lou Ann Flaherty, Val Emick

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YOUR NEWSLETTERS OR ON YOUR WEBSITES**

SPECIAL EDITION

**UPDATE ON CALIFORNIA REDISTRICTING: WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW YOU CAN
PARTICIPATE!**

Redistricting is the once-every-decade practice across the United States of redrawing state and federal voting boundaries, with the goal being equal distribution of voters, based on the most current census information. The results impact who represents local voters in the U.S. House of Representatives, the State Board of Equalization (tax and fee districts), and the state Senate and Assembly, based on changes in population and demographics, among other things. In California, the census data is also used to redraw boundaries for county supervisor districts, as well as cities, school districts and other agencies that elect representatives by geographical districts. The **Federal Voting Rights Act** also requires that in areas with a high population of minority voters, the lines must be drawn to keep enough of each minority group in a district to give them a chance of electing one of their own to represent them, while at the same time not “packing” a district artificially.

In the past, redistricting in most of the U.S. was handled by state legislators. This led to accusations of “gerrymandering”- drawing district lines to favor a particular political party. In 2008, California voters passed the **Voters First Act**, which resulted in the formation of the **California Citizens Redistricting Commission (CCRC)**. These are regular citizens from around the state, and they have the final say in how the district lines will be drawn. Their decisions are made using census data, federal and state laws and guidelines, and input from the public. Their meetings are open to the public and they are required to take public input. They are not allowed to use voter registration information or any partisan data to draw lines,

information on the California Citizens Redistricting Commission, and the Voters First Act, [Click HERE](#).

In determining what the census information shows and how best to achieve accurate and fair redrawing of boundaries, the CCRC must also consider "Communities of Interest", among other factors. They must, as much as possible, keep those communities together. Splitting these types of communities up is seen as a negative, minimizing their voices. A community of interest is, as broadly defined by Calif. law "a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation." Official examples are a little vague because officials want to leave it open to interpretation, and open for them to get the people to tell them how they think their community fits that definition and where they are. An example, however, might be something like a historic community, or a mountain community- places where people share a common lifestyle and/ or geographic or environmental concerns. It could also be a minority group. By law, these communities cannot be based on political parties, or who their representatives currently are. Due to the pandemic, final results of the California Redistricting Commission may not be available until mid-December of this year, and possibly not until February 2022.

GET INVOLVED!!! The good news about the delay is that it gives all of us more time to contribute our input to this process. A new tool, "<https://drawmycacomunity.org>" allows anyone interested to submit information on what they think their ideal political community is and why the state should consider their ideas. Residents are not limited to the number of submissions, because one person could belong to more than one community of interest. You can also attend virtual commission meetings and offer comments verbally or in writing. You know those who want to promote ideas beneficial to Democrat gerrymandering will take active participation. Let's not just sit idly by and let that happen. ***Contribute to the process!***

Issue #18- April 22, 2021

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Gretchen Cox, Elaine Freeman, Lou Ann Flaherty, Val Emick

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GOOD NEWS! **SB 663**, the bill to allow the personal information of anyone who signs a recall petition to be made available to others including the recall target **has been withdrawn**. It may come back next year, but for now, it's DEAD!!!

EMERGENCY POWERS

SB 397- Essential services: religious services - **This bill, the Religion is Essential Act, would, during a state of emergency or local emergency, require the Governor or the local government to deem religious services to be an essential service and to be necessary**

are defined, and would require the state and local government to permit a religious organization to continue operating and engaging in religious services during a state of emergency to the same or greater extent than other organizations or businesses permitted to operate. **STATUS 4/14/21: Failed passage in committee, but granted reconsideration!**

CIVIL RIGHTS

SB 238 - Discrimination: Political Affiliation, Political Relief -This bill broadens the Unruh Civil Rights Act to extend the protections to persons regardless of political belief or affiliation. The bill specifies that these provisions are declarative of existing law. Would add political affiliation as a protected characteristic in connection with employment and housing. **This bill is in response to persons being stigmatized or terminated because of their political beliefs.**

TAXES

AB 1223, Firearms and ammunition: excise tax. This bill would, until January 1, 2028, impose an excise tax on a retailer in the amount of \$25 per firearm on the sale in this state of a handgun or semiautomatic rifle or shotgun sold as new, as provided, and an excise tax on a retailer in the amount of ___% of the gross receipts from any sale of ammunition. The tax would be collected by the state pursuant to the Fee Collection Procedures Law. This bill would include a change in state statute that would result in a taxpayer paying a higher tax within the meaning of Section 3 of Article XIII A of the California Constitution, and thus would require for passage the approval of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the membership of each house of the Legislature. **Status: Hearing April 26th.**

INFRASTRUCTURE

SB 32- Energy: general plan: building decarbonization requirements - Existing law requires the **State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission** to assess the potential for the state to **reduce greenhouse gases** from the state's **residential** and commercial building stock by at **least 40 percent below 1990 levels by January 1, 2030**. Because municipalities and counties do not have a role in regulating utility resource plans, SB 32 would require local government to mandate policies in their general plans, climate action, or a greenhouse gas emission plan, that would prevent or reduced natural gas in new homes and commercial buildings beginning January 1, 2023. This policy would be another case of Sacramento further eroding local control. On an energy-equivalent basis, natural gas rates are 67% less than electricity. Forced building requiring electrification would have grave effects on California's overall economics. ***As the state continues to face a housing affordability crisis, lawmakers should be embracing natural gas, not creating policies that would curtail or eliminate its use. The state wants to eliminate natural gas because it can't be 100 percent carbon emission-free, however, generating electricity requires natural gas generation plants.***

The More We Know...

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