

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Week of January 20, 2025

State Issues

<p>Special Session Progress</p>	<p>Both the Senate and Assembly held budget hearings this week as part of the Special Session called by Governor Newsom. Two special session budget bills related to the Los Angeles wildfires were introduced on Monday, January 20 and voted on the floor of both houses on Thursday.</p> <p>The bills, ABX1 4 and SBX1 3, are both Budget Bills Jr. and amend the 2024 Budget Act. The wildfire bill package provides up to \$2.5 billion in state funding for wildfire response and recovery, which augments the state’s ongoing emergency authority to respond to disasters. The bills include requirements for reporting to the public and the Legislature on wildfire response spending. Federal reimbursements for eligible state spending will be sought.</p> <p>The debates on the bill were relatively cordial and the votes were unanimous. Many legislators noted that there will be much more action -- both policy and early budget action – in the months to come. Assembly Republican leader Gallagher did offer an amendment to increase the total support by \$1 billion to fund forest management and fuel reduction. The proposed amendment did not pass.</p> <p>The bills passed both houses and have already been signed into law by the Governor. Bills related to funding legal action against the Trump Administration also passed the Senate and will get a vote in the Assembly next week.</p>
<p>Defending Medi-Cal in 2025</p>	<p>This week, the California Health Care Foundation released a series of materials – with the promise of more to come – to support advocates who will be working on Medicaid advocacy.</p> <p>It is anticipated that federal policymakers will consider major changes to the Medicaid budget as well as to the regulations and rules governing the program. Any large-scale federal changes to Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) have far-reaching consequences for California’s health care system and the millions of Californians enrolled in the program.</p> <p>The materials include memos that cover the role of the Federal Government in Medicaid, Facts and Figures of California’s Medicaid program, and a primer on Medi-Cal financing. They also include materials that outline the percentage of the population – by Congressional, Assembly and Senate Districts – that receive Medi-Cal coverage or a Covered California insurance subsidy. There is also a document that reviews the state’s CalAIM proposal, which is intended to transform Medi-Cal.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(more)</i></p>

<p>Health Policy Makers in New Roles</p>	<p>There are some new roles on the horizon for leaders that have shaped health care policy over the last many years.</p> <p>First, Angela Pontes, who has served as the Governor’s Chief Legislative Secretary on health care issues, has accepted a new role Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for Planned Parenthood. Prior to her 4 years with the Governor’s Office, Angela was Legislative Director in Assembly Member Aguiar Curry’s office where she most notably led the charge to enhance access to and reimbursement for telehealth services.</p> <p>Stepping into Angela’s role advising the Governor on health policy, will be Paula Villescaz. Paula has a great deal of experience in health care policy and advocacy, working for more than 6 years as a Consultant for the Assembly Health committee before moving on to be the Assistant Secretary at the California Health and Human Services agency, and finally as an advocate with the County Welfare Directors Association. More to come once this appointment is official – expected in the next two weeks.</p> <p>Former Assembly Member Dr. Jim Wood has been named a partner at California Strategies, a public affairs consulting firm in Sacramento. If you recall, last year, he announced that he would not be running for his last two-year term for the Assembly. In the announcement from the firm, they mention his tenure as Chair of the Assembly Health Committee and also highlight his work in shaping policy on homeowners’ insurance, wildfire preparedness, energy infrastructure and broadband, which of course will be a beneficial experience as the State grapples with rebuilding after the LA fires.</p>
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