

LEGISLATURE SET TO RETURN, BUDGET STILL TOP PRIORITY

The California Legislature returned today for what is scheduled to be the final 3½ to four weeks of the legislative year. Just how long the return will be depends on a number of factors, chief among them whether or not agreement can be reached on the 2007-08 Budget, currently 48 days late and counting.

Technically, only the Assembly, which recessed on July 20 after adopting the Budget conference report ([SB 77 – Ducheny](#)) on a 56-23 vote, actually “returned” to Sacramento. The state Senate, which failed to muster the necessary 2/3 vote of its membership in the support of the measure the same day, and again on August 1, has officially been “on call” all summer, though few of its members actually have been in town since the second vote.

The official stumbling block to the adoption of the Budget continues to be the refusal of Senate Republicans, who constitute 15 members of the 40-Senator body, to vote for the current proposal until substantial additional spending cuts are made. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed to use his line-item veto authority to reduce the Budget by \$700 million if the Republicans will relent and send it to him, but so far the Senate Republicans have refused to accept an offer that they see as based on accounting tricks rather than real spending reductions.



Perata

A second issue holding up the approval of the Budget is the Senate Republicans' insistence that legislation be adopted to prevent Attorney General Edmund G. Brown, Jr., from suing counties under California's Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to compel them to include greenhouse gas considerations in their general plans.

HUNDREDS OF NON-BUDGET BILLS TO BE HELD HOSTAGE?

In addition to resolving the Budget issues, the Legislature has roughly 937 bills whose fate it must determine during its final few weeks of session. However, Senate President pro tem Don Perata (D-Oakland) has vowed not take up any non-budget issues until a state spending plan is passed, either in committee or on the Senate Floor. Senate committee agendas will be published, but the

hearings cancelled. The Assembly, on the other hand, plans to conduct “business as usual,” according to Speaker Fabian Núñez.

Among the bills that could be affected by the Senate's proposed non-action is [AB 159](#) by Assembly Judiciary Committee Chair [Dave Jones](#), D-Sacramento, which would provide authorization needed for the Governor to appoint an additional 50 judges in the coming year, as well as permitting the conversion of 162 subordinate judicial officer (SJO) positions to judgeships at the rate of up to 16 per year. The bill has become the centerpiece of controversy over the Governor's appointment of minorities to judgeships, which many Democratic legislators characterize as abysmal. The bill is in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Also awaiting final action is [SB 686 \(Corbett\)](#), the State Bar funding authorization bill. The bill is on the Assembly Floor, but must come back to the Senate for a final vote on concurrence in Assembly amendments.

KATE HOWARD TO LEAVE JUDICIAL COUNCIL'S OGA

Kate Howard, the universally respected 14-year veteran lobbyist who has headed the AOC's Office of Governmental Affairs for the past three years, has announced that she will be leaving the office at the end of the current legislative year in October to explore new opportunities. In a press release, Chief Justice Ronald George praised Howard's performance and noted that she “will be greatly missed.”

Donna Hershkowitz, currently the assistant director of the Office of Governmental Affairs, will serve as acting director after Howard leaves.

DEADLINES UPCOMING

- [Monday, August 20](#) - Legislature reconvenes.
- [Friday, August 31](#) - Last day for Fiscal Committees to meet and report bills to Floor.
- [September 3-14](#) - Floor session only. No committee may meet for any purpose.
- [Friday, September 7](#) - Last day to amend bills.
- [Friday, September 14](#) - Last day for each house to pass bills. Interim recess begins on adjournment.
- [Sunday, October 14](#) - Last day for Governor to sign or veto bills.