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LEGISLATURE'S HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

The state Capitol will be a very quiet place for the next two weeks, as most legislative offices will be closed for the holidays. Typically, however, the closure schedule will be different for the two legislative houses – and even for offices within each house.

The Senate will follow its traditional holiday pattern of taking the last week of the year off. Most Senate offices will close at 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 23, and re-open either Friday, January 2, or Monday, January 5, depending upon the discretion of the individual Senator or chair of the committee in question. Assembly offices will close at noon on Wednesday, December 24. Depending upon the individual Members or committee chairs, some offices will remain dark until Friday, January 2, while others will be open for business Monday and Tuesday, December 29-30.

Members of the Legislature themselves are not required to return to Sacramento until Monday, January 5, when the regular 2003-04 session reconvenes. Because it is the second year of the session, January will be a particularly busy month, as the Legislature considers hundreds of bills introduced in 2003 that must be approved by their house of origin by the end of the month, or die by operation of the California Constitution (see the as-yet-incomplete [Schedule of Committee Hearings](#)).

GOVERNOR BYPASSES LEGISLATURE, FUNDS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Flanked by some 30 mayors (including former Governor Jerry Brown, now mayor of Oakland), police chiefs, sheriffs, and other local officials, Governor [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) Thursday announced at a Capitol [press conference](#) that he would be exercising his executive emergency powers to provide local governments with the moneys they lost when he rescinded the tripling of the state's car tax upon taking office.

The legality of the move was [endorsed](#) by state Controller [Steve Westly](#), who also spoke at the press conference. And although legislative Democrats largely condemned the action, Capitol commentators almost universally agreed that the Governor had re-established his authority after appearing to back down in the face of opposition to his plan to place a stringent state spending limit on the March ballot.

Senate President pro Tem [John Burton](#) (D-San Francisco), while sharply questioning the need for the action, reportedly called the maneuver "bold" and equated it to one by President Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt wanted to send the U.S. fleet around the world but couldn't get Congress to agree to pay for it. Since he had the money to send the fleet halfway around the world, Roosevelt did so – then told Congress if it wanted the ships back it would have to find the money for their return. To no one's surprise, Congress complied.

UCL INITIATIVE CLEARED TO CIRCULATE

Secretary of State Kevin Shelley has cleared for circulation the [initiative](#) sponsored by the California Chamber of Commerce and Civil Justice Association of California to make dramatic changes in the state's Unfair Competition Law. Proponents of the initiative have until May 14, 2004, to collect the 373,816 signatures necessary to qualify the initiative for the November ballot.

The initiative, sparked by the Legislature's refusal to pass industry-backed legislation to change the UCL in the face of its alleged misuse by isolated law firms against many Southern California small businesses, was announced last October (see [Sacramento Scene, Vol. 2, #40](#)). Opponents of the measure say that it goes much too far towards completely eliminating any private right of action on behalf of California consumers, and predict its defeat at the polls if it qualifies.

DEADLINES UPCOMING

- January 5 - Legislature reconvenes from Interim Recess.
- January 16 - Last day for policy committees to hear and report to Fiscal Committees fiscal bills introduced in their house in 2003.
- January 23 - Last day for any committee to hear and report to the floor bills introduced in their house in 2003.
- January 23 - Last day to submit bill requests to the Office of Legislative Counsel.
- January 31 - Last day for bills introduced in 2003 to be passed out of the house of origin.

"SACRAMENTO SCENE" TAKES BREAK

Following the Legislature's example, the *Sacramento Scene* will take a break from publication until 2004. Happy New Year to all!