

BUDGET CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

The joint-house Conference Committee on the Budget Wednesday began the always delicate, sometimes confrontational task of reconciling the differences between the Senate and Assembly budget plans in preparation for a vote on a final budget on Senate and Assembly floors.

The committee, which is composed of three members from each house, reflects the composition of the houses because each is represented by two Democrats and one Republican. This year's committee line-up is as follows:



Chesbro



Alpert



Johnson

Senator [Wes Chesbro](#) (D-Arcata), Chair of the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee; Senator [Dede Alpert](#) (D-San Diego), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee; Senator [Ross Johnson](#) (R-Irvine), former Senate Minority Leader; Assembly Member [Darrell Steinberg](#) (D-Sacramento), Chair of the Assembly Budget Committee; Assembly Member [Judy Chu](#) (D-Monterey Park), Chair of the Assembly Appropriations Committee; and Assembly Member [Rick Keene](#) (R-Chico), Vice-chair of the Assembly Budget Committee.



Steinberg



Chu



Keene

Committee members likely will weed through the differences between the two versions of the budget in a manner that allows them to reconcile minor differences in an expeditious manner. Some of the more difficult and controversial issues will be passed over while legislative leaders and the governor attempt to reach compromises that may then be adopted by the Conference Committee.

It is unclear at this point whether the committee format will be "closed" or "open." A so-called closed conference means that only those items in

controversy, i.e., those where a difference exists between the houses, may be addressed and modified. An open conference effectively allows the committee to modify any item in the budget regardless of its status.

The Conference Committee is charged with completing its work in time for the full Legislature to send a budget to the Governor by June 15, the first Constitutional requirement related to the annual state budget. This timeline is more or less discarded as meaningless and is seldom met.

The more crucial deadline is the constitutional requirement that the Legislature provide the Governor with a balanced budget by June 30. The general consensus around the Capitol is that the June 30 deadline will be met this year.

SENATE COMMITTEE REJECTS BAR NUMBER IDENTITY THEFT BILL

The Senate Public Safety Committee Monday rejected on a 2-3 vote legislation ([AB 1826](#) – [Bogh](#)) that would have added theft of a professional license number – including an attorney's State Bar number – to the list of offenses that constitute "identity theft" in California.

The bill earlier had passed the Assembly on a unanimous, 76-0, vote, but ran up against the iron resolve of the Democratic majority of the Senate Public Safety Committee to reject any measure which could produce a felony conviction for a non-violent offense that could count as a third "strike" under California's "three strikes" sentencing law. Identity theft is a "wobbler," a crime prosecutable as either a felony or a misdemeanor.

The State Bar's Board of Governors supported AB 1826 as a targeted attack against a handful of individuals who have appropriated the Bar numbers of attorneys, often bearing the same or similar names, in order to perpetrate fraud against unsuspecting clients.

DEADLINES UPCOMING

- [June 15](#) -- Budget bill must be passed by midnight (Art. IV, Sec. 12 (c)).
- [June 25](#) -- Last day for policy committees to meet and report bills.
- [June 30](#) – Budget must be approved by Legislature and sent to Governor.
- [July 2](#) -- Summer Recess begins upon adjournment, provided Budget Bill has been enacted.