

# State Bar of California, Office of Governmental Affairs

## *The Sacramento Scene*

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### **Oracle and The Budget Deficit**

The chatter heard in and around the Capitol this week continued to be on how the Oracle Corporation was given a no-bid \$95 million software contract. The [Joint Legislative Audit Committee](#) held a series of public hearings this week about the Oracle contract, interviewing a host of former administration officials about their respective roles in the decision-making process. One of the [committee's](#) interviewees was former State Bar Executive Director Steve Nissen, who headed the Governor's Office of Planning and Research at the time the contract was under consideration.

The state's \$24 billion budget deficit and its resolution is probably the hottest issue in Sacramento. As one would expect, those who face large cuts in their programs' budgets are actively protesting Governor Davis's recommended budget cuts. Capitol handicappers are predicting that the June 15 constitutional deadline of approving and sending the budget bill to the Governor will once again fail to be met. Some key legislative staffers are betting that the Legislature will not pass the budget bill until the fourth week of July.

### **Legal Document Assistants Sunset Repeal in Works**

Legislation sponsored by the Judicial Council to make permanent and improve the "Legal Document Assistants Act" is moving through the Legislature as [AB 3028](#) (Assembly Judiciary Committee).

Enacted in 1998 through [SB 1418](#) of that year as a four-year pilot project, the LDA Act defines and regulates the activities of legal document assistants (LDA's), non-attorneys who are authorized to, for compensation, provide self-help service to members of the public who are representing themselves in legal matters.

To assist in determining whether to repeal or simply extend the sunset date for the act, and to determine what changes would be necessary or desirable for the further protection of consumers, the council commissioned a study of the program by Professor J. Clark Kelso (recently appointed acting [Director of the Office](#)

[of Information Technology](#) to help restore confidence in light of the Oracle scandal – see previous story) and the [Capital Center for Government Law & Policy](#) of McGeorge School of Law. After reviewing a draft of that study, representatives of the council and consumer advocates from the Department of Consumer Affairs, Attorney General's Office, State Bar and others, are considering amendments to clarify and tighten the advertising requirements and restrictions applicable to LDA's, increase the bonding requirement for groups of LDA's practicing together, and updating the act to reflect recent changes to the law relating to UPL.

The amendments being developed will be inserted in AB 3028 after it clears the Assembly.

### **"House of Origin" Committee Deadlines Pass (for the Most Part)**

The committee portion of the "house of origin" half of this year's legislative session came to a close today -- mostly. For the next week (Tuesday, May 28, to Thursday, May 30), both houses will meet on the Floor only. A limited number of house of origin bills that have missed the deadlines (e.g., Senate Bills introduced in 2002 that have not yet cleared the Senate) will be heard post-deadline when committee hearings resume the week of June 3. With those rare exceptions (almost all of which are in the respective Appropriations Committees), any bill which was introduced in 2002 and still hasn't cleared its house of origin is dead.

The following are upcoming legislative deadlines, according to the Joint Rules of the Senate and Assembly, and (in some cases) the California Constitution.

- May 31- Last day for bills to be passed out of the house of origin.
- June 3 – Policy committee hearings may resume.
- June 15 – Budget bill must be passed by Legislature.
- June 28 - Last day for policy committees to meet and report any bills.
- July 5 - Summer recess begins at the end of the day - if budget bill has been enacted.