

Legislature Back in Business with Substantial Schedule Changes

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The Assembly had its first week of being back in business this week in a world that is anything but business as usual. The Senate comes back this Monday leaving the houses slightly out of sync until after the summer recess.

In addition to facing a projected [\\$54 billion deficit](#) the Legislature has a massive load of legislation to get through and amendments keep flying in. So far on the Assembly side some committees are requiring authors to submit statements of why bills are COVID related and need to be heard, but some are not. However, the leadership on the Senate side has been firm about requiring bills to be COVID-19 related in order to be set for hearing.

The COVID-19 recess that has been in effect since the statewide shelter in place order has resulted in the Assembly holding only one policy committee hearing and bills only being referred to one policy committee. Normally, [Assembly Committees](#) meet once a week from March until mid-May and bills are referred to multiple policy committees because they impact several subject and issue areas. The Senate also will be single referring bills but will be holding more than one hearing per committee. This means any organization or member of the public that has an interest in these bills will only have one shot per house to voice their concerns and submit letters in support or opposition. Also, the testimony is being limited and done mostly over the telephone, creating the potential for more technical difficulties and a chance their voices will not be heard.

The Legislature has a lot of flexibility in setting its own schedule, with the exception of a few California Constitutional deadlines. The most looming deadline is the budget must be past by midnight on June 15th. But here's the kicker, the state won't have actual numbers of revenue until a month later, because the tax deadline was extended until July 15th. That means Legislators are [Constitutionally mandated to pass a balanced budget](#) a month before they know how much revenue the state will actually receive. It is not quite clear how a budget can be balanced without knowledge of the actual revenue, but the Constitution requires it be done.

This means the majority of the details of the budget will be worked out through the [trailer bill process](#). These bills essentially are the implementation of the budget's allocations and can be passed at any time after the budget until the end of session on August 31st. This means that many details of how spending will be implemented will come once the legislature has a better grasp on what the financial future of the state will be. The good news is there are members who have dealt with the 2008 recession and the challenges it presented. But nobody has ever dealt with anything like this before.

Stay tuned. It's definitely going to be a wild ride.

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