

ALERT

Just-Signed Bills Offer Relief from Pandemic Hardship

More Funds for Small Business Grant Program



Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation this week to provide relief to Californians experiencing pandemic hardship.

SUPPORT

Included in the package were bills to

allocate another \$2.1 billion to the small business grant program and waive license renewal fees for businesses in industries hit hard by the COVID-19 shutdowns.

The bills went into effect immediately upon being signed on February 23.

The California Chamber of Commerce applauded the Governor for taking action that offers some much-needed economic relief for California’s small businesses.

“Small businesses in the state are reeling from the economic fallout of

COVID-19 shutdowns and the financial bridge provided through the fee waivers and grants approved today by Governor Newsom will provide help and hope as we wait for California’s economy to recover,” the CalChamber said in a statement issued after the bill signings.

“While the Governor’s action today is an important step forward, our small businesses still need tax and regulatory relief,” the CalChamber continued. “The Legislature should act swiftly to pass AB 80, which offers preferable tax treatment for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, and they should reject any proposal that adds to the cost of doing business in the state.”

Small Business Relief

CalChamber-supported **SB 87 (Caballero; D-Salinas)** adds \$2.1 billion to the \$500 million program providing

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California Releases Employer COVID-19 Compliance Portal



As the COVID-19 pandemic approaches the one-year mark, federal, state and local governments

have spent the last year continually developing new laws, regulations, ordinances, orders, and countless “guidance” documents and updates. It’s difficult, if not overwhelming at times, for employers to track the sheer number of resources.

To assist employers, the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency and the California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) have consolidated resources for employers on a **new website**, <https://saferatwork.covid19.ca.gov/employers/>.

The website doesn’t contain new guidance, meaning it doesn’t have new information that employers have to learn; instead, all the information is consolidated from existing agency guidance to create one central hub for employers to find all the rules and guidance applicable to them.

Resources

The website contains, for example, information and resources employers can use to make their workplaces safer, including:

- Training resources;

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Promoting Equality, Diversity and Opportunity in The Workplace

See new webinar at calchamber.com/diversity.

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grants of \$5,000 to \$25,000 for small businesses, nonprofits and cultural institutions hurt by the pandemic.

To be eligible to apply, the annual gross revenue of the business needs to be between \$1,000 and \$2.5 million.

Grant money may be used for costs such as payroll, health care benefits, rent, utilities and more.

Fee Waivers

CalChamber-supported **SB 94**

(Skinner; D-Berkeley) waives for two years license renewal fees for restaurants, bars, barbers and cosmetologists.

Annual fees for bars and restaurants licensed through the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control range from \$455 to \$1,235, according to the Governor's office, which estimated the fee relief will apply to 59,000 businesses. More than 600,000 barbering and cosmetology individuals and businesses are licensed through the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Still Pending

Set to be considered by the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee on March 1 is CalChamber-supported **AB 80 (Burke; D-Inglewood)**, which brings California into partial conformity with federal tax treatment of deductible business expenses paid for using PPP funds. Once signed, the bill will allow businesses to deduct up to \$150,000 in expenses covered by the PPP loan from their state income taxes.

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- COVID-19 laws that employers should be aware of (such as AB 685, SB 1159 and the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 emergency temporary standard);

- Communicating COVID-19 information to employees;
- Safety practices;
- Testing information; and
- Steps needed to reopen safely.

The website also consolidates information and resources related to employers' obligations when an employee is sick or exposed to COVID-19, including recording and reporting requirements, outbreak information, cleaning procedures, leave benefits and return-to-work criteria.

Helpful Tool

The most helpful website tool is the **COVID-19 Employer Portal**. The portal generates a customized guidance "road map" based on information that an employer supplies.

If employers are trying to figure out which guidance applies to their business, they can enter information about their business location, business type/industry, existing safety procedures and practices, and other details, and the portal generates a custom guide with the specific information applicable to them, including both state and local requirements and guidance.

This portal is a great place to start

for employers planning to reopen or increase activities as their county moves through the COVID-19 tier system. It's also a useful tool for employers who have remained open and are already complying with the myriad governmental laws, standards, orders and guidance because the custom road map can be used as a checklist to help ensure employers' existing practices follow the latest state and local guidance.

Employers should consider adding the new **website** to their COVID-19 bookmark collection and monitor for further developments.

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