

September 2023 CalOPS Board Policy Update

Branche Jones - Lobbyist

We were recently introduced to Mr Branche Jones through another Charter School Superintendent who has worked with him for some time. We are meeting with him regularly and have found his support and knowledge of the political systems in Sacramento to be an excellent support.



Branché Jones is a Sacramento based lobbyist and political consultant. He has worked in the State Legislature and on numerous political campaigns throughout California. Branché began his career working on local and legislative campaigns in California. One of the first campaigns that he managed led to the election of the first African-American woman to the Sacramento City Council; he then went on to serve as her Chief of Staff. While working in the legislature he staffed several members of the legislature on educational, agricultural, appropriations and labor issues. He also worked on the floor of the State Assembly and State Senate for the Democratic leadership, advising several members of the leadership on legislative procedure. After that Branché lobbied for the San Francisco Unified

School District and served for seven years as the Vice President of Governmental Affairs for the California Charter Schools Association. For the Association he handled all legislative and political issues in California and Washington DC, while managing a team of lobbyists and consultants. Currently, he manages his own lobbying and consulting firm in Sacramento.

Omnibus Trailer Bill

The Education Omnibus Budget Trailer was signed into law by Governor Newsom on July 10, 2023. Included in these bills are three provisions applicable to charter schools: 1) the term of all charter schools whose charters expire between January 1, 2024, and June 30, 2027, are extended by one additional year; 2) the moratorium on nonclassroom-based charter schools will remain in place for an additional year; and, 3) on review of charter petition appeals the SBE must give local board's decisions the highest level of deference under the abuse of discretion standard.

Proposed Changes to Independent Studies Laws

The California Department of Education (CDE) and State Superintendent Tony Thurmond are proposing an extensive set of amendments to the complex regulations that govern independent study in California schools. On Tuesday, August 1, the CDE held a hearing to solicit public input on the proposed amendments. CSDC, CCSA, as well as Mr. Jones, have all voiced their opposition to these proposed changes and are continuing to monitor the progress.

As part of this proposal, Mr. Thurmond has asked that the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) and The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) convene a study on the current Non-Classroom Based (NCB) rules and regulations. As part of this process the LAO has interviewed a number of NCB School Leaders including our very own Dr. Savage on 8/21/23. The findings of the study are set to be completed and published by March of 2024. We will continue to monitor this process and keep you updated.

End of the Legislative Session

The Legislature reconvened on Monday, August 14 for the final sprint before they adjourn for the year on September 14. The fate of key school facility funding and policy bills will be decided by September 1, the deadline for bills to be approved by the appropriations committees in both the Senate and the Assembly. Starting in the 1980s, the appropriations committees have used the “suspense file” to hold bills with fiscal implications. This practice allows legislative leaders and the governor’s staff to reconcile policy proposals and budget priorities as a whole. It’s also a convenient place for expensive, controversial bills to die with dignity because it doesn’t require a “no” vote from any member: bills placed on the suspense file are in limbo until the September 1 deadline. Once that deadline passes, bills that haven’t had votes are effectively done—at least for this year. Unfortunately, some of these bills may be revived in January, when the legislature reconvenes for the second half of the two-year session. (CSDC)

California State Senate Elected New Leader

The California Senate will get a new leader after Democrats on Monday tapped a North Coast lawmaker as the next president pro tem of the upper house, marking a transition at the Legislature’s top ranks from leaders who represent urban population centers to rising power for politicians from largely rural districts.

State Sen. Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg) will take over for Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) at a yet-to-be-determined date in 2024, according to a statement issued by the two leaders. The transition in the Senate comes after a busy weekend of political wrangling over the succession. McGuire, 44, solidified his position with the support of Atkins, who terms out of office next year. The change represents a second reshuffling of power in the Legislature this year and, as a result, a diminished role for Southern California lawmakers. [Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas \(D-Hollister\) replaced Lakewood lawmaker Anthony Rendon](#) as the leader of the lower house this summer.

A native Californian, McGuire is known in Sacramento for his work on wildfire and the environment, key issues to his constituents in a district that encompasses much of the Northern California coast from Del Norte County at the Oregon border down through Marin County. McGuire, who terms out in 2026, has been an outspoken critic of Pacific Gas & Electric, calling out the company for not maintaining its equipment, failing to cut back vegetation around power lines and for causing wildfires. As a confidant and No. 2 to Atkins, McGuire was intimately involved in landing policy deals among the governor, Senate and Assembly on [the infrastructure plan this year](#) and the [climate package last year](#).

Atkins has led the Senate since 2018, when she was sworn in as the first woman and openly LGBTQ+ president pro tem in state history. She was named president pro tem of the Senate two years after serving as speaker of the Assembly, becoming [the first legislator to hold both leadership posts since 1871](#).