

Capitol Briefs: Budget deadline is upon us!

Capitol Weekly

Budget trailers bills now in the wild: As reported by McGeorge law professor and registered lobbyist – and Capitol Weekly columnist – Chris Micheli, lawmakers over the weekend released the main budget bill (AB 107, in print) and two trailers bills not in print at press time: SB 167 and AB 154. Budget committees get to work on the trailer bills on Tuesday morning, with everything needing to be to Gov. Gavin Newsom by Saturday, June 15th.

California among many states facing an insurance crisis: California may be knee deep in an insurance crisis, but it is hardly the only state in such dire straits. As reported by Stateline, numerous states have all suffered mightily from a cluster of climate-driven disasters – from wildfires to hurricanes – that have helped drive insurance policy rates sky high. And with private insurers pulling out or threatening to do so, resident in states from California to Colorado and Texas to Florida are increasingly being driven to state-funded insurers of last resort.

Amy Bach, executive director of United Policyholders, a nonprofit that advocates for insurance customers, told Stateline the government-run programs have significant advantages, most notably being tax exempt and free of shareholder pressure on bottom line profits.

“Publicly supported insurance programs are here to stay,” she said. “It behooves us to build them as smart as we can.”

Police K-9 bills move to the Senate: Two bills addressing the training and standardization of the use of K-9s in law enforcement have passed the Assembly and are now being debated in the Senate Rules Committee.

The bills: AB 2042 and AB 3241, look to create minimum, baseline training for every agency in California that uses police K-9s, as well as requirements to standardize reporting requirements for police K-9 deployments. They had to pass concurrently for either to move forward.

AB 3241, authored by Assemblymember Blanca Pacheco (D-Downey), would require each law enforcement agency in California that utilizes K-9s to maintain a policy that, at a minimum, complies with guidelines adopted by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. In addition, law enforcement agencies would need to establish a training regimen that includes a course certified by the commission and all law enforcement agencies with a K-9 unit would be required to publish a report annually on the use of their animals.

Pacheco said the standards would focus on four key areas to standardize the use of K-9's in law enforcement: training, policy requirements, legal principles, and reporting requirements."

"In passing AB 3241, California will have the most comprehensive state-wide standards in the country, Pacheco said in urging her colleagues to support the measure.

Assemblymember Dr. Corey Jackson (D-Moreno Valley), author of AB 2042, had initially proposed a bill in early 2023 that would have essentially banned the use of police K-9s. That bill, AB 742, died in the Assembly last February. Jackson cited a 2023 report from the California Attorney General on the use of force by law enforcement agencies as an area of concern regarding the use of police K-9s. That report, according to the ACLU, showed racial disparities in the use of force toward people of color.

"When we dug a little deeper, we recognized that California did not have a uniform policy when it comes to K-9s," Jackson said during floor debate on the bill. In addition to creating uniform guidelines for the use of police K-9s by all California law enforcement agencies, AB 2042 also includes language that officers carry out duties, including those involving the use of K-9s, in a fair and unbiased manner. Jackson spoke on the Assembly floor in support of the bill speaking to the discussions and cooperation between Assembly members to create this package of bills, saying "So that no matter what city you got to, you know the laws they are abiding by and the guidelines they are abiding by."

If they become law, these bills would be the first in the country to create requirements standardizing the training and data reporting for the use of police K-9s.