



# CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

*Seeking Justice for All*

## Two CAOC-sponsored bills signed by Gov. Brown

AB 644, SB 658 address issues in the civil justice system

**SACRAMENTO (Sept. 27, 2017)** – Two bills sponsored by Consumer Attorneys of California to reform civil procedure in California have been signed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

Senate Bill 658, by Sen. Scott Weiner (D-San Francisco), was signed today. The bill will revise the current statute to address the issue of unreasonable and arbitrary restrictions on attorney examination of potential members of a jury in civil trials during the process known as voir dire. The current statute was intended to prohibit these limitations, but its enforcement has eroded in the quarter century since its passage, and attorneys have reported that in some courts there are arbitrary limits of as little as 30 minutes for questioning potential jurors. Such questioning is crucial in revealing potential juror prejudice, and it benefits both plaintiffs and defendants.

SB 658 retains judicial discretion but specifies mandatory factors that must be considered when evaluating the time and extent of voir dire. Often unforeseen issues arise once jury selection has begun, and the bill addresses this by requiring judges to reevaluate how much time is needed and allow for supplemental time if warranted.

Assembly Bill 644, by Asm. Marc Berman (D-Palo Alto), was signed Tuesday. The bill, co-sponsored by the California Defense Counsel and the California Judges Association, is a court efficiencies measure that requires counsel for parties in civil litigation to engage in a meet and confer process before pleadings of motions to strike and motions for judgment on the pleadings, just as they already must before demurrer.

*Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs' attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.*

### **For more information:**

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