



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

Bill allows web use to ease COVID-19 courts backlog

SB 1146 codifies Internet video depositions and email service of process

SACRAMENTO (May 22, 2020) – A measure to enshrine the use of web video and other internet technology to ease the growing backlog of civil court cases caused by COVID-19 courthouse shutdowns won approval today in its first legislative test.

SB 1146 by Sen. Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana), co-sponsored by Consumer Attorneys of California and California Defense Counsel, was given the green light by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused California courts to either halt all progress on civil cases or throttle it back to a bare minimum. The result is a mounting backlog of hearings and trials. Meanwhile, court leaders have announced that civil cases will be pushed to the back of the line, possibly until 2021 or later.

SB 1146 takes a much needed first step towards allowing justice to continue by codifying actions taken in recent weeks by Gov. Gavin Newsom, Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye and the Judicial Council that have allowed remote video depositions and e-service of process during the health crisis. Those emergency actions were taken to limit public exposure to COVID-19 while keeping civil cases moving toward resolution.

The new emergency rules adopted by the state have helped keep the gears of civil justice moving, but they do not extend after the health crisis is over. The mountainous backlog of cases caused by the courthouse shutdowns, however, is expected to outlast the pandemic. SB 1146 will help clear that backlog by codifying the emergency rules and making remote depositions and e-service a permanent working part of California civil cases.

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.

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