



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

Elders, workers, patients on CAOC's legislative agenda

Court funding remains a major priority for consumer attorneys

SACRAMENTO (March 4, 2015) – With the deadline for introducing bills at the California Legislature having passed, Consumer Attorneys of California will be advocating for ten pieces of priority legislation in 2015, including key bills affecting elders, workers and patient safety.

But CAOC's most important fight at the State Capitol remains, as it has for several years now, the battle to restore adequate funding to California's courts system. More than \$1.1 billion has been cut from the judicial branch budget since the start of the Great Recession in 2008, with severe impacts on court services for consumers and businesses. Gov. Brown's proposed 2015-16 budget includes increased funding for the judicial branch that would bring it closer to the level of funding required to assure all Californians of access to justice. But there is still much more to be done to return the courts to a stable financial footing.

"CAOC will continue its focus on ensuring that California's courts are fully funded," said CAOC president Brian D. Chase. "Adequate court funding is crucial to enforce the laws passed by the Legislature."

Here are the bills that CAOC will work to pass in this legislative session:

Elder assistance: In the wake of a *Sacramento Bee* investigative series last year, CAOC is working with the California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR) on two bills that will ensure accountability and transparency for nursing homes and residential care facilities for the elderly. Asm. Susan Eggman (D-Stockton) is carrying [AB 601](#), related to residential care facilities for the elderly, and Asm. Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento) is the author of [AB 927](#), related to skilled nursing facilities.

Workers' rights: CAOC is committed to putting an end to the unfair use of forced arbitration that requires workers and other consumers to give up their right to a trial by jury and often requires workers to give up legal rights just to file a complaint with a regulatory board. CAOC has been meeting with the California Labor Federation, and Asm. Roger Hernandez (D-West Covina) has put in a placeholder bill, [AB 465](#).

Patient safety: CAOC is working with medical professionals, narcotics officers and other stakeholders to require prescribers of potentially-addictive narcotics to check California's CURES prescription drug database before doing so, to prevent patients from receiving an oversupply of medication from multiple practitioners through "doctor shopping." Sen. Ricardo Lara (D-Long Beach) is carrying [SB 482](#). Bob Pack, founder of the Troy and Alana Pack Foundation and creator of the CURES database, is part of this effort, and support from law enforcement and many consumer groups is expected.

Auto insurance: Uninsured and under-insured motorists (UM-UIM) coverage is designed to compensate those who are injured by drivers who are not adequately insured, but too often the minimum UM-UIM coverage required by the state falls far short of the needs of injured Californians. New Senate Insurance Committee Chair Richard Roth (D-Riverside) has put in a placeholder bill, [SB 245](#).

Disability access: CAOC is committed to working with both persons with disabilities and the business community to address the situation where businesses are sent demand letters or receive lawsuits concerning disability access violations, but compliance isn't the primary goal. The goal of any legislation or lawsuit must be to ensure access for persons with disabilities. Sen. Richard Roth (D-Riverside) has agreed to carry [SB 251](#), co-sponsored by CAOC and the California Chamber of Commerce.

Court efficiency: Civil disputes over non-catastrophic cases can have a great impact on lower-income workers but are often lost in the system and leave vulnerable Californians without compensation. The Expedited Jury Trial Act, enacted in 2011 through the efforts of CAOC and the California Defense Counsel, provides a format to resolve these cases while saving time, expense and court resources. The act is due to sunset this year, but Asm. Luis Alejo (D-Salinas) is carrying [AB 555](#) to extend and expand it. Asm. Ed Chau (D-Monterey Park) is carrying [AB 1141](#), sponsored by CAOC and the California Defense Counsel, to clarify legislative history related to Code of Civil Procedure Section 998 and to address motions for partial summary adjudication, while Sen. Bob Wieckowski (D-Fremont) has authored [SB 383](#) to examine demurrers.

Health records: Asm. Eric Linder (R-Corona) is the author of [AB 1337](#), requiring a standardized health records request form, and CAOC intends to work with the California Hospital Association to assist patients and health care providers in this area.

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:

**J.G. Preston, CAOC Press Secretary, 916-669-7126, jgpreston@caoc.org
Eric Bailey, CAOC Communications Director, 916-669-7122, ebailey@caoc.org**