



First half wrap: CAOC bills help elderly, environment and immigrants, curb Rx epidemic, forced arbitration CAOC victorious on measures improving consumer rights on multiple fronts

SACRAMENTO (June 3, 2016) – Consumer Attorneys of California scored several victories during the first half of the 2016 legislative year, with measures advancing that address the explosion of forced arbitration and epidemic of prescription drug abuse, protect victims of environment catastrophes, and secure the legal rights of undocumented immigrants and the elderly.

The CAOC-backed legislation that advanced includes:

Civil damages for undocumented immigrants – [AB 2159](#) (Gonzalez) ensures that the immigration status is irrelevant in personal injury and wrongful death actions, and will guarantee fair and just compensation for every Californian, regardless of immigration status. *Passed the Assembly, pending in the Senate.*

Protecting the elderly – [SB 1065](#) (Monning) helps seniors get to trial more quickly in an abuse claim by eliminating the defendant's unilateral and automatic right to appeal when it loses a motion to compel arbitration. *Passed the Senate, pending in the Assembly.*

Forum and choice of state law – [SB 1241](#) (Wieckowski) stops corporations from forcing Californians to go out of state to settle disputes or forcing Californians to settle disputes under watered-down consumer protection laws of another state. *Passed the Senate, pending in the Assembly.*

Arbitration firms unfairness & bias – [SB 1078](#) (Jackson) addresses injustice and bias by private arbitration firms that handle forced arbitrations. Such firms often work with defendant companies on a regular basis without disclosing any conflict of interest. Jackson's bill strengthens current marketing limitations and disclosure requirements as well as rules relating to the ability of arbitrators to enter into future arrangements with corporate defendants.

Curbing the prescription drug epidemic – [SB 482](#) (Lara) requires prescribers to check the state's CURES prescription drug database before prescribing narcotics to first-time patients in order to prevent patients from receiving narcotics from multiple providers. *Passed the Senate, pending in the Assembly.*

Environmental disaster victims – [AB 2748](#) (Gatto) is an outgrowth of the Porter Ranch natural gas disaster in Los Angeles County. It prohibits polluters from preying on vulnerable residents forced out of their homes by offering safe housing in exchange for waiving their right to sue the polluter. *Passed Assembly, pending in Senate.*

Civil Procedure – [AB 2527](#) (Chau) will produce court procedural efficiencies, including allowing coroner’s photographs to be released prior to litigation and requiring earlier disclosure of expert information. *Passed the Assembly, pending in the Senate.*

“This legislation will help protect Californians on a variety of fronts,” said Elise R. Sanguinetti, Consumer Attorneys of California president. “Our only disappointment is that the Assembly failed to act on bills to help military veterans and victims of civil rights violations.”

With corporate Democrats joining Republican lawmakers in opposition, the Assembly earlier this week failed to pass [AB 2667](#) (Thurmond), which would have blocked the use of forced arbitration to settle civil rights disputes. That same coalition undercut support this week for [AB 2879](#) (Stone), which would have protected military reservists from being forced into mandatory arbitration when they are illegally fired by a civilian employer as a result of being called to serve our nation.

“These were modest, narrowly focused measures that didn’t deserve a single no vote,” Sanguinetti said. “We should do whatever it takes to protect victims of civil rights violations or our veterans when they’ve been illegally fired. Instead, the California Chamber of Commerce aggressively targeted both bills with no regard for doing the right thing. It’s a real shame.”

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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