

The Dynamics of Government

This year I have used the President's Message to explain in "plain English" how laws and regulations impact the grocery industry. For this year's final message I want to explore the dynamics of state and local government.

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The Association represents you in three distinct areas, the State Legislature, local government and regulatory agencies. The legislature and local governments are the most dynamic considering the regulatory process takes months, if not years, to see results.

I am often asked if there is a significant difference between state and local advocacy. The simple answer is yes. They are very different and both present significant challenges. They also have the potential to dramatically impact the grocery industry.

State government can mandate grocers to drastically change operations and behaviors in regards to employment, climate change and taxes. Local governments have initiated some of the most impactful issues to the industry including bag bans, worker retention and predictive scheduling.

State government involves 120 Assemblymembers and Senators proposing legislation and all new laws require the consent of the Governor. Legislative sessions last two years and bills can take that entire time to pass, but if a bill misses a deadline it is dead. The state process also includes several breaks-in the action for the summer and during holidays.

There are 58 counties and 482 cities in California which usually have five to seven elected officials. They meet nearly every week year round, they can make a decision with only 72 hours notice, and can finalize a law inside two weeks. It's a very rapid and nimble process of governing.

State elected officials have the ability to caucus and coordinate votes, by party preference or other similar distinction. Local elected officials have strict rules on not sharing vote intentions in order to avoid making decisions in private.

It is also important to note that in the State Legislature there are often strict controls placed on public testimony, when making a decision as a body, with many allowed only to state their name, affiliation and position. At the local level it is mandated by law that the public is given time to make comments during meetings – and they often do. Both scenarios can result in a rollercoaster ride of consideration and decision-making.

I am sure you will agree both state and local government relations are crucial to our success as an industry. Without vigilance at both levels California would be a much a harder place to be a grocer. Thank you for your support as a CGA member and for participating in the legislative process. We couldn't do it without you. ■