Governor Takes Final Action on Bills Passed This Year

Governor Gavin Newsom's October 13 deadline to sign or veto bills passed this year by the Legislature marked the end of the first year of the 2019-2020 legislative session. The legislature sent 1,041 bills to the Governor this year and 870 were signed into law. Among those bills acted on by the Governor in the final days leading up to the deadline, the following three measures were viewed as high-priority by the California Coalition on Workers' Compensation (CCWC).

Senate Bill 537 (Hill)
CCWC Position: SUPPORT
Governor's Action: SIGNED
This bill requires a health care provider, employer, insurer or contracting agent that contracts for medical services in the workers' compensation system at rates different from the official medical fee schedule (OMFS) to disclose those rates to the health care provider. It also requires medical provider networks (MPNs) to list all medical providers on a public roster, and prohibits MPNs from altering medical treatment plans and medical billing codes.
CCWC supported the bill because it creates a database on physician utilization review outcomes and provides transparency in physician network reimbursement rates. CCWC provided testimony in support of the bill in the Assembly Insurance Committee and coordinated support among other employer organizations.

Senate Bill 542 (Stern)
CCWC Position: OPPOSED
Governor's Action: SIGNED
The measure creates a presumption that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is industrial for public safety officers (police and firefighters). Sponsored by the California Professional Firefighters, the bill also provides for post-termination eligibility (up to five years) for workers' compensation benefits covered by this presumption.
CCWC opposed this bill aggressively and was successful in getting the bill substantially amended in the Assembly Insurance Committee. The amendments limited the scope of the bill to PTSD, eliminated retroactivity, and inserted a five-year sunset provision.

Assembly Bill 346 (Cooper)
CCWC Position: OPPOSED
Governor's Action: VETOED
This bill would have extended wage replacement under Labor Code 4850 to peace officers employed by a school district, county office of education, or community college district.
CCWC worked with a coalition opposed to this bill and provided substantive testimony in opposition in policy and fiscal committees. Opposition was based on the fact that no objective evidence has been offered to demonstrate that this enhanced benefit is necessary. Further, there has been no evaluation of the cost to public agencies, which would be compelled to fund these special benefits out of their education budgets. Following its passage out of the Legislature, CCWC worked actively to urge the Governor to veto the measure.

Legislative Review Webinar Materials Available Online
The "2019 Year-End Legislative Review," a webinar presentation produced by CCWC, took place Wednesday, October 17. The program featured CCWC Legislative Advocate Jason Schmelzer providing an in-depth review of the political landscape relative to workers' compensation in California, and a report on legislative developments from 2019.

Many thanks to those CCWC members who were able to attend the webinar. For those who were unable – or those that wish to review material from the webinar – a full recording and the presentation file from the program are both available online to CCWC members.