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UCAN Chambers Release 2022 State Policy Agenda

Top concerns: Taxes, Regulations, COVID, Public Safety and Housing

The United Chamber Advocacy Network (UCAN), a coalition of ten local chambers of commerce, representing over 6,000 employers in four northern California counties, released its 2022 State Policy Agenda this week at a forum attended by local legislators.

The agenda is directly informed by results from a survey administered by UCAN chambers in December and January and subsequently approved by each chamber's board of directors. The following state issues are identified as top priorities and will drive positions the UCAN chambers take in support or opposition of bills in the state Legislature.

- Reduce Taxes and Regulations
- End COVID Restrictions/Foster Recovery
- Enhance Public Safety
- Expand Housing Supply

UCAN chambers' members consistently express concerns about California's high taxes and burdensome regulatory climate but the topics of COVID restrictions, public safety and housing supply rose to the top this year.

An example of the legislation UCAN plans to advance is Assembly Bill 2390 by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance), which seeks to amend Proposition 47 to allow the aggregation of the values of the property involved in one or more cases of shoplifting or theft into a single count or charge when the case involves one or more acts of theft or shoplifting.

Sponsored by the California Retailers Association, AB 2390 is intended to address the growing concerns about organized criminal retail theft.. Currently under Prop 47, which was approved by voters in 2014, if a shoplifter steals less than \$950 of merchandise in any one incident, the incident is treated as a misdemeanor, the suspect often quickly released, and charges are seldom filed. AB 2390 intends to deter crime by allowing police and prosecutors to charge suspects with a felony if and when the aggregate of merchandise in multiple incidents exceeds \$950.

Rachel Michelin, President and CEO of the Retailers Association, spoke to UCAN chamber leaders at the forum, and reminded them of the value of the voice of small business in the legislative process and praised UCAN for its effectiveness working in the legislature in partnership with state and regional business organizations to advance its agenda.

Featured guests at the forum was a bipartisan group of legislators who represent UCAN chamber communities – Assemblymember Ken Cooley (D-Rancho Cordova), Assemblymember Kevin Kiley (R-Rocklin), Assemblymember James Gallagher (R- Yuba City), and Senator Jim Nielsen (R-Red Bluff). Also attending were staff members representing Assemblymember Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove) and Senator Brian Dahle (R-Bieber).

Asm. Cooley discussed his bill, AB 1996, which will encourage the legislature to reestablish its oversight authority over state agencies and eliminate outdated and redundant regulations. Asm. Cooley praised the partnership he enjoys with his GOP colleagues, who frequently work together on issues of common concern, most recently rallying support for the Ukrainian community in the Sacramento region.

Asm. Kiley expressed his continued concern that the Governor is administering policy through executive action, exploiting the emergency authorization approved by the Legislature to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Asm. Kiley also introduced his own bill, AB 1599, to fully repeal Prop 47. The bill, which was supported by UCAN in committee, was defeated on a party line vote, 5-2.

Asm. Gallagher was recently elected to the position of Assembly Republican Leader and noted that from this position, he'll have a better opportunity to call attention to the concerns identified in the UCAN policy agenda. Asm. Gallagher said the biggest problem facing California is a declining quality of life – noting increases in crime, homelessness and housing prices which he hopes to address in part, through greater accountability of the Governor and responsible state agencies.

Sen. Nielsen, whom Asm. Cooley identified as “The Dean of the Senate,” praised UCAN for effectively advocating for the interests of local chambers and small business owners, which he said are the lifeblood of our local communities and the economy. Sen. Nielsen said the biggest threat facing California is the legislature, as the representatives of the people, ceding authority to the Governor. He said he was heartened to see “the people” increasingly engaged in the public process driven, in large part by parents frustrated with COVID closures and progressive curriculum.

“UCAN really helps us take our chamber’s advocacy efforts to the next level and better represent the priorities of our members,” said Debbie Manning, CEO of the El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce. “Advocacy really is truly a priority for our members and UCAN gives us a platform to amplify our voice, working with other local chambers of commerce in our region and with state level business organizations.”

UCAN is managed by Dave Butler of Advocacy and Management Group in Sacramento. A registered lobbyist and experienced advocate at the state and local levels, Butler allows the El Dorado Hills Chamber to tell its members, they have a lobbyist working for them at the State Capitol in Sacramento – a resource few local chambers enjoy.

To obtain a copy of UCAN’s 2022 State Policy Agenda, visit www.amgroup.us/UCAN.

UCAN - United Chamber Advocacy Network

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El Dorado County, El Dorado Hills, Elk Grove, Folsom, Lincoln, Rancho Cordova, Rocklin, Roseville, Yuba-Sutter Chambers of Commerce