

Great minds may disagree about whether a new professional football stadium (or team, for that matter) would be good for Los Angeles. But a new [last-minute bill](#) that the California State Senate is considering today, which would eliminate further environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act for a newly-approved stadium complex in the City of Industry, east of downtown LA, has put a new spin on this question. The bill appears to have created widespread opposition, but the state Assembly has approved it nonetheless. The bill is now in front of the state Senate, which has until midnight tonight to decide whether to approve this bill, along with many others, and send it on to the Governor for his signature (though it's possible that there will be a special session later this month to consider some measures). I think case by case exceptions to CEQA, such as this one, are generally an extremely bad idea, and this situation is no exception.

The stadium proposal, from developer Ed Roski's Majestic Realty, has been controversial. The nearby City of Walnut has filed a lawsuit to delay the project; Walnut claims that the project hasn't complied with CEQA's requirements. (CEQA requires detailed review of environmental impacts, public participation in the review process, analysis of potential alternatives to the project that might have fewer environmental impacts, and identification and adoption of all feasible mitigation of significant environmental impacts.) According to the lawsuit, the environmental review was adapted from a review for a different project - resulting in lack of analysis of many project impacts - and incorporates inadequate mitigation for the stadium's environmental impacts.

The legislation, AB 81, is meant to short-circuit this lawsuit, and is based on the premise that proper application of CEQA in this case will impose too much of a burden on jobs and the local economy. David Pettit of NRDC has [explained why this is wrong](#) on his blog, quoting from a letter from twelve environmental organizations opposing the bill.

And opposition isn't limited to environmentalists. The editorial boards of the [Los Angeles Times](#) and [San Francisco Chronicle](#) both have weighed in against the bill. Public environmental review generally helps governments make better decisions. In this case, where there are serious allegations of inadequate mitigation of environmental impacts, proper CEQA review will benefit all of us, as the L.A. County Board of Supervisors has recognized in opposing the bill. Many projects - schools, hospitals, universities, and other major, important undertakings - have been built after CEQA review. CEQA allows projects to be built even if there are serious environmental impacts, but those impacts have to be mitigated to the extent feasible. The approving agency must acknowledge the impacts and find that other benefits outweigh those impacts.

In short, while CEQA's requirements aren't always easy to meet, they typically benefit the

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public. Case-by-case exemptions from the law, offered to well-connected developers, undermine the law's effect as well as the perception of a level playing field. If the environmental review of the stadium doesn't hold up in court, the developer and city should have to redo it.