California's Right-Wing Avatar

If you’re looking for the leading anti-environmental organization in California politics, it’s not hard to find: it’s the California Chamber of Commerce. Like its counterpart at the national level (subject of this outstanding Washington Monthly profile), the state chamber is a reliable water carrier for the interests of the ideological right wing. It provides political cover for the insurance, agribusiness, oil and gas, banking, and other financial services interests, claiming to be helping most businesses while actually assisting a reactionary political agenda. For example, it fiercely opposes AB 52, Assemblymember Mike Feuer’s proposal to institute rate regulation for health insurers, which could conceivably save small businesses millions in insurance costs, but it didn’t even bother to support AB 710, the Infill Builders’ proposal to limit excessive parking regulations. Essentially, the California Chamber provides a similar service to the US Chamber: when unpopular businesses don’t want to take the lead in opposing legislation, they get the Chamber to proclaim it a “job-killer” in exchange for the membership fee.

This should come as little surprise if you take a look at the Chamber’s Board of Directors: its players are a collection of bankers, agribusiness (including Jim Boswell, the state’s largest landowner), oil and gas companies, corporate lawyers (looking to drum up business), Peet’s Coffee, insurance companies, privately-owned utilities…

Favorite Brew of Reactionaries
Statewide!

Peet’s Coffee? What in the world is *it* doing on the board?

Look: it certainly makes sense for any business to try to network with other business, but the California Chamber isn’t a networking opportunity, like the countless local chambers across the state (the vast majority of which have much more centrist politics). And neither Starbuck’s, nor Coffee Bean, nor any of the other chains are on the board.

Peet’s has an image of a local, artisan, neighborhood coffee shop with hints of progressive politics, although the vast majority of its lines are neither organic nor fair trade. (If you want those, I’d suggest Weaver’s Coffee, which is both). And now

it is in bed with the most reactionary political force in the state. It should provide an explanation, or expect citizens of this *very* blue state to look elsewhere for their morning caffeine fix.