

The California State Legislature is now finally in its off-season. Governor Newsom had until Monday, September 30<sup>th</sup> to sign or veto bills that the legislature passed and sent to his desk. In a final tally of bills, according to [CalMatters](#), Governor Newsom vetoed approximately 18% of the nearly 1,000 bills that landed on his desk in the final days of session, or close to 1 in 5 bills. Taking into consideration all the bills presented throughout the year, the overall veto rate for the 2024 session was 16% out of 1,200 total bills per CalMatters. The 2024 veto rate is on par with previous years.

The period after the signing deadline was unusual with the [Governor calling a special session to produce legislation to prevent gas price spikes](#). This was following a session filled with many exciting and contentious issues including AI, reparations, and criminal justice reform. Despite the wide range of issues the legislature was contending with, many innovative environmental protection issues advanced, especially those aimed at tackling environmental health challenges in our most disadvantaged communities. Let's see which of the environmental bills I've been tracking for Legal Planet were touchdowns and which ones were sidelined.

## **Assembly Bills:**

A major focus of environmental regulation in California has been on ways to alleviate the health disparities faced by environmentally burdened frontline communities. Governor Newsom signed Assemblymember Mia Bonta's [AB 2851](#), which creates fence-line air quality monitoring for metal shredding facilities, that are often located in disadvantaged communities. The data gathered from this system will help determine the contaminants affecting human health in the communities surrounding these facilities so that evidence-based solutions can be created to protect and improve human health.

In another victory for environmental and human health amongst disadvantaged communities in California, Assemblymember Laura Friedman's [AB 1963](#) addressing paraquat dichloride was signed into law. The Environmental Working Group detailed how [paraquat disproportionately threatens California's low-income Latino communities](#). The bill began as a ban but faced strong opposition; it now requires the Department of Pesticide Regulation to provide a reevaluation of the herbicide paraquat dichloride by January 1, 2029.

Increased health and safety measures around oil and gas facilities was another significant environmental topic the legislature addressed this session. A trio of bills aimed to combat the harms of these facilities on human health, again upon those communities which are most often to and have suffered most acutely, disadvantaged communities of color. I described

these bills, [AB 3233](#) (Assemblymember Dawn Addis), [AB 1866](#) (Assemblymember Gregg Hart) and [AB 2716](#) (Assemblymember Isaac Bryan) in my last few posts [here](#) and [here](#). All three bills were signed by Governor Newsom, and my colleague, Julia Stein, explains them in a recent post [here](#), with a focus on AB 3233 and how it creates a clear path for local phase-out efforts.

A notable veto, Assemblymember Gail Pellerin's [AB 2513](#), which would have required warning labels on gas stoves regarding their health impacts stating "WARNING: Gas stoves can release nitrogen dioxide, benzene, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, and other harmful pollutants into the air, which can be toxic to people and pets. Stove emissions, especially from gas stoves, are associated with increased respiratory disease. Young children, people with asthma, and people with heart or lung disease are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of combustion pollutants. To help reduce the risk of breathing harmful gases, allow ventilation in the area and turn on a vent hood when gas-powered stoves and ranges are in use." In the Governor's [veto message](#), he describe it as a "static approach" which "falls short in enabling timely updates." This is part of a [broader discussion to move away from gas appliances to cut indoor pollution](#), so we will watch to see how this issue gets raised again next session.

## Senate Bills:

Most of the bills I discussed in my last Legal Planet post [Environmental Bills at the 10-yard Line](#) were signed by the Governor including Senator Caroline Menjivar's [SB 1193](#) which will phase out the sale of leaded airplane fuel, prohibiting sales after January 1, 2031. Senator Menjivar expressed the importance of this legislation for the health impacts of those who live in communities adjacent to airports. According to her [press release](#) at the time of bill introduction, "A 2021 study found that children who lived less than a mile away from an airport had 21% higher lead levels in their blood compared to children who lived farther away. Also, when airports are in lower income neighborhoods with higher populations of people of color, emissions are compounded with other environmental hazards concentrated in those areas." This passage is another move toward protecting the health of disadvantaged frontline communities in California.

[SB 1420](#), authored by Senator Anna Caballero, will streamline hydrogen production within California, as the state looks to this technology in our clean energy transition. And Senator Scott Wiener's [SB 960](#) was a win for bicycle riders and pedestrians in California, as the bill requires state highway projects overseen by Caltrans to include pedestrian, bicycling, and transit facilities.

[SB 1221](#), authored by Senator Dave Min which I discussed in [my last post](#) was a priority bill for California Environmental Voters. This legislation prioritizes investments in disadvantaged communities in our efforts toward reaching net zero by 2045. My colleague Denise Grab, who directs the new Energy Law and Policy Project at the Emmett Institute, takes a deeper dive in her recent Legal Planet post [SB 1221 is Law. Time for Targeted Neighborhood Electrification](#).

In an effort to combat the negative environmental impacts of “fast fashion”, Governor Newsom signed first-in-the-nation legislation requiring retailers to take back old clothes. [SB 707](#) authored by Senator Josh Newman seeks to reduce the millions of tons of old items that end up in our landfills. We now watch to see if the first-in-the-nation California legislation takes hold in the rest of the country, showing once again that California is an innovative leader in environmental efforts.

A set of companion bills to prohibit plastic carryout bags also became law thanks to [SB 1053](#) (Senator Catherine Blakespear) and [AB 2236](#) (Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan). While you are correct to think this was already the law in California, this legislation closes a [loophole](#) which allowed stores to provide thicker “reusable” plastic bags. This legislation will eliminate the option of plastic bags, with stores providing paper bags instead.

One notable veto was [SB 615](#), authored by Senator Ben Allen, which sought to create an extended producer responsibility (EPR) for EV batteries. In the Governor’s [veto message](#) he spotlighted that California is leading the revolution toward a zero-emission transportation future. He commented that he agreed with the intent of the bill and encouraged future conversations amongst stakeholders to occur, so we will continue tracking this issue as it will likely come up again next year. See my colleague Julia Stein’s post making the case for why [we need a circular economy for EV batteries](#).

As in previous years, California has proven to be innovative its environmental legislation. The legislature has once again taken important steps toward eradicating environmental burdens in our most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. The state has also taken critical steps advancing creative solutions to our most pressing climate challenges. We still have to wait and see how voters act on [Proposition 4](#), the climate bond measure on the California ballot.

Let me know your thoughts about these bills in the comment section below. And feel free to share what you think legislators should look at next year as plans are now underway to create their legislative packages. Looking forward to hearing from you. I’ll be back in January with a legislative lookahead previewing what I think will be coming for the 2025

session. We'll be welcoming many new state legislators who will be coming to Sacramento with fresh ideas of issues they want to tackle, so stay tuned. As always, I can be reached at [ashjian@law.ucla.edu](mailto:ashjian@law.ucla.edu).