

Established in 1991, UCC serves as the representative voice for state legislative advocacy for high-population counties in California. Initially composed of seven counties, the association has grown to 14 today. Over 80 percent of the state's population reside in UCC counties. Consequently, urban counties carry out critical programs and services to the state's most vulnerable populations. For more information, including details on our Board of Directors, please visit [our website](#).

UCC Weekly News: January 22, 2021

Vice-President Harris, Senator Padilla Sworn In: Let the Musical Chairs Begin

With the inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris this week, the shuffle of a number of elected officeholders has officially begun. With the resignation of then-U.S. Senator Harris, the formal appointment and swearing in of now-U.S. Senator Alex Padilla, we now await the formal confirmation – which requires legislative action – of Assembly Member Shirley Weber as the state's new Secretary of State. The Assembly has convened a Special Committee on the Office of the Secretary of State, chaired by Assembly Members Marc Berman and Evan Low, which will meet on Tuesday to consider approving the appointment of Assembly Member Weber as the state's chief elections official. Senate Rules Committee is scheduled to meet on Wednesday to consider Assembly Member Weber's appointment. Both houses must also approve the appointment with a floor vote.

Assuming a successful confirmation (which is extremely likely), a special election must be held to fill Assembly Member Weber's Assembly District 79 seat in San Diego County. Dr. Weber's daughter, Dr. Akilah Weber, a physician and La Mesa City Councilmember, has announced her intention to run for her mother's seat.

We'll continue to keep you posted as the electoral musical chairs continues...

Assembly Kicks Off Homelessness Conversation with Joint Hearing

The Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration and the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee held a joint information hearing this week to explore the state's role in the ongoing homelessness crisis. The [agenda](#) featured three panels of speakers including the Secretary of the Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency, local

agency representatives, and experts from academia and nonprofits. If nothing else, we encourage you to look at the agenda as it includes background material that succinctly summarizes the one-time allocations the state has made to locals in recent years. The Legislative Analyst's Office [handout](#) also provides some additional context and details that were the focus of the hearing.

Our biggest takeaways from the hearing are that some members of the Assembly are still singularly focused on the ability of local governments, and in particular counties, to expeditiously and effectively invest state funds to mitigate and prevent homelessness and that a state database might soon help answer numerous data related questions about the efficacy of certain homelessness programs over others. The Administration's representatives responded to the local government inquires stating that nothing in the data suggest that counties, cities, or Continuums of Care (CoCs) are working with anything other than appropriate exigency to implement state programs to house our burgeoning homeless population. Moreover, a significant share of the funding was only made available to locals in the middle of 2020 and amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the state anticipates its new data system – the Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS) – to become operational in the spring. The database will allow the state to access and compile standardized data collected by CoCs and will provide more information about the delivery of homeless services in the state.

We fully anticipate future hearings on homelessness issues in the coming months, especially once new quarterly data is reported by locals and CoCs and the HDIS system is up and running.

Senate Republicans Announce Leadership Change

Senate Republican Leader Shannon Grove [announced](#) yesterday that the nine-member caucus has unanimously voted in Senator Scott Wilk as her successor. Senator Wilk, who represents portions of Los Angeles County, will take over the Senate Republican leadership position within a few weeks.

HHS Budget Hearings Scheduled

The Assembly and Senate budget subcommittees have released their schedules for discussing health and human services budget issues. The hearings are starting much earlier – in early February – and will conclude in mid-March. Both houses note that in an effort to prioritize limited time and hearing space, fewer issues will be discussed. We're also hearing that very few member budget requests will be agendaized and discussed.

The health hearings are as follows:

- Public health: Assembly, February 8; Senate, February 19
- CalAIM: Assembly, March 9 (behavioral health components) and March 16 (jointly with Assembly Health); Senate, February 12
- Behavioral Health: Assembly, February 22; Senate, February 12
- Office of Health Care Affordability: Senate, February 5

The human services hearings include:

- Aging issues: Assembly, February 2; Senate, March 2
- CalWORKs and CalFresh: Assembly, likely March 3; Senate, February 16
- Children's issues: Senate, February 9
- Child Care: Senate, February 16
- Access to housing, eviction prevention and racial equity: Assembly, March 3

LAO Issuing Budget Analyses on a Flow Basis

As the budget subcommittee hearing picture becomes more clear, the Legislative Analyst's Office has begun to release its assessment of various aspects of the Governor's proposed 2021-22 spending plan. The office's publications are posted as they are released on this [page](#).

Telehealth Hearing

Assembly Health Committee is holding an oversight hearing on February 16 on telehealth policy in California post-pandemic. More details on the hearing will be posted on the committee's [page](#) in the days to come.

Referendum on Flavored Tobacco Products Qualifies for November Ballot

In late-breaking news, the Secretary of State announced today that the tobacco industry has secured sufficient signatures to force a referendum on the November 2022 ballot on [SB 793](#) (Hill, 2020) – a measure that prohibited the sale of most flavored tobacco products. As with all referenda, the law that is being challenged will not take effect until the voters weigh in on the referendum. The tobacco companies that launched the referendum effort reportedly have spent \$21 million in their efforts to overturn the law and protect a profitable market sector.

