

April 10, 2020

To: Senate Standing Policy Committee Chairs

From: President pro Tempore Toni Atkins

Re: Committee Work during Legislative Recess

Dealing with the COVID-19 crisis has brought unprecedented changes into all of our lives. And more change is certain in this fluid and fast-moving emergency. In these times, our government has to change as well if we are going to succeed in doing the public's business and protecting the public health.

We must embrace our role as policymakers and utilize the expertise of the Senate policy committees to identify key issues and solutions as we navigate this crisis. Therefore, I am asking chairs to put on pause the evaluation of existing bills that otherwise would be scheduled for hearings when we return in order to focus on the Senate response to issues that we must immediately address. Every worker, business (large and small), school district, and government at all levels have felt the effects of this pandemic in significant ways. Upon our return, it is imperative that we are ready to take the necessary deep dive to solve problems related to the well-being of all Californians.

I have asked Senators to reconsider their priorities and reduce the number of bills they carry accordingly. For example, I am scaling back my legislative portfolio and plan to pursue only two pieces of legislation this year. As Senators notify committees of which bills they will not be pursuing, committee chairs can evaluate their workload and make recommendations to the caucus regarding the most pressing issues.

Likewise, I am directing Senate policy committee chairs to work with their vice-chairs and committee members to compile a list of issues within their committee jurisdiction that need immediate legislative and/or regulatory response as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I request this information be submitted to my office - Kimberly Rodriguez, Policy Director – no later than Wednesday, April 22, 2020. This information will be shared with both caucuses of the Senate for further discussion and deliberation.

The Senate committees represent the policy expertise of our house and their insight and analysis will enable us to prioritize our resources on the most pressing legislative challenges related to COVID-19.

Thank you in advance for your work and if you have further questions, please feel free to contact Nick Hardeman, Chief of Staff or Kimberly Rodriguez, Policy Director.