



ECOS

ENVIRONMENTAL
♦ COUNCIL ♦
OF SACRAMENTO

Post Office Box 1526 | Sacramento, CA 95812-1526

May 21, 2023

The Honorable Toni Atkins
President Pro-Tempore
California State Senate

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
California State Assembly

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
California State Senate

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
California State Assembly

The Honorable Josh Becker
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 2
California State Senate

The Honorable Steve Bennett
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3
California State Assembly

The Honorable Dave Min
Chair, Senate Natural Resources and
Water Committee
California State Senate

The Honorable Rebecca Bauer-Kahan
Chair, Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife
Committee
California State Assembly

The Honorable Ben Allen
Chair, Senate Environmental Qual. Committee
California State Senate

The Honorable Luz Rivas
Chair, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
California State Assembly

Re: Opposition to Trailer Bills – Request to Move Significant Policy in Policy Process

Dear President Pro-Tempore Atkins, Speaker Rendon, Senator Skinner, Senator Becker, Senator Min, Assemblymember Ting, Assemblymember Bennett, and Assemblymember Bauer-Kahan:

The Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS) strongly opposes the Administration's excessive use of the budget trailer bill process to move environmental policy. The Governor has just announced an 11-trailer bill package – in addition to other recently released trailer bills -- that will significantly change judicial review, environmental permitting, imperiled species protections, water law, and community engagement among other important laws and policies.

This abuse of the budget process eliminates an open and transparent discussion of policy decisions. We request that the Legislature decline the Governor's invitation to move policy measures in the budget process and instead move these proposals through the regular legislative process.

These proposed trailer bills are likely to have a significant impact on environmental, energy, water, and good government policies. It is inappropriate to move sweeping policy changes through the trailer bill process because the budget process will not provide for the necessary analysis and review by the public and policy and legal experts. It is important to note that there is less than one month – even if we work every day – to draft, review, debate and pass the trailer bills.

The trailer bill process does not provide for inclusive and measured policy hearings, open and public consideration of amendments, or the ability of public discussion. Indeed, the trailer bill process is the quintessential “behind closed doors” process that cuts out any meaningful public engagement or transparency except for chosen stakeholders. It is exclusive rather than inclusive.

We agree that our state – indeed the planet – is facing a climate crisis. And we agree that we need to move forward with climate infrastructure quickly. However, there is no reason why legislation to tackle these important issues must be moved through the trailer bill process instead of through the regular process and enacted in January. ECOS stands ready to engage with the Legislature and Administration to discuss and draft policy bills – in an open and transparent process so that ALL parties have an opportunity to review, debate and compromise critical policies that affect communities, natural resources, and cultural resources.

Moreover, given the state’s current budget situation, we do not believe that it is good practice or good governance for the Legislature to be asked to resolve the current budget shortfall and the related complicated issues around the budget while also moving a huge package of major policy changes – all within 25 days. Again, this is why there is a bifurcated process in which we move budget and policy separately.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide our input on this important matter and look forward to working with the Legislature to address our climate goals while providing the public the opportunity to participate in a meaningful policy process. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Susan Herre".

Susan Herre AIA AICP
President of the Board of Directors
office@ecosacramento.net