Among the topics for debate this year, few will be as dynamic as the discussion on guns and ammunition. The introduction of an initiative by Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom to regulate guns and ammunition, the tragedy in San Bernardino last month, followed by President Obama’s executive order have essentially created a “perfect storm” to drive the conversation at the state level.

Newsom’s initiative represents his most substantive political effort during his tenure as Lt. Governor, and signifies the start of his 2018 gubernatorial campaign. Key components of the initiative include ammunition background checks, bans on large capacity magazines, and increased gun restrictions on prohibited persons. However, not much of the initiative is new. In fact, many components were taken directly from previous legislation introduced by the current President pro Tem of the Senate, Kevin de León.

If politicians hate anything, it’s someone else taking credit for their work. Shortly after Newsom introduced his initiative, Senator de León reached out to Cal Chiefs to discuss his proposal. It was clear that de León intended to orchestrate a package of legislation in an effort to compel the removal of Newsom’s initiative. Beyond the obvious contest between top politicians, this strategy signified the very real threat Newsom’s initiative is to Democrats worried about increased voter turnout by right-leaning gun enthusiasts. But before de León could reveal his legislation, the tragic events in San Bernardino expanded the conversation.

Politics are reactionary, and the shooting in San Bernardino brought enough national attention to trigger a presidential executive order. It also engaged members of the State Assembly on the issue of gun violence. In late December, rumors started circulating about the Assembly introducing gun and ammo legislation. Competition between the two houses of the Legislature is nothing new, and it showed with the introduction of nearly identical bills last week.

So far, three bills have been introduced to fix the “bullet button” loophole by amending the definition of an assault weapon to include a detachable magazine: SB 880 (Hall), AB 1663 (Chiu), and AB 1664 (Levine). AB 1663 is sponsored by the Attorney General. Each bill is nearly identical to previous legislation that failed in 2014. Other gun bills include AB 1673 (Gipson), which expands the definition of "firearm" to include an unfinished frame or receiver. AB 1674 (Santiago) extends the purchasing limit on handguns (one per month) to include all types of firearms. Also, AB 1695 (Bonta) increases safeguards on straw purchases and lost/stolen firearms. Both SB 880 and AB 1695 are part of de León’s bill package, but the rest are driven by the individual Assemblymember.

Upcoming bills that are still being drafted include the expansion of the gun violence restraining order; increased standards on gun dealers; licensing for large capacity magazines; ammunition background checks; and another attempt to regulate “ghost guns.”

All of these dynamics leave many questions about how this will play out. Meanwhile, Cal Chiefs will continue to meet with stakeholders and promote what is best for our departments’ and the public.

Please let us know if you have any questions or would like additional information. Thanks!