Today marks the first day of the Legislative Spring Break. Despite the absence of policy committee hearings, the capitol community is still abuzz with action. The Cal Chiefs Legislative Committee has already reviewed more than 300 bills, and you can find our positions on the Cal Chiefs website here.

Efforts are ramping up to both implement and “clean up” the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act (MMRSA). First came the news that on February 4, 2016, Lori Ajax was appointed chief of the Bureau of Medical Marijuana Regulation (BMMR) at the California Department of Consumer Affairs. Prior to assuming her new position, Ajax was the chief deputy director of the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. Adding to the BMMR leadership, on Friday Governor Brown appointed An-Chi Tsou to be the senior policy advisor to the Bureau. Tsou has been a senior consultant for the California State Assembly Committee on Health since 2015 during which she played an integral role in drafting the MMRSA. She held several positions in the Office of California State Assemblymember Rob Bonta from 2012 to 2014, including legislative director, science and technology policy fellow and legislative aide.

In addition to the news of two well-deserved appointments, we received good news last week that AB 2614 (Bonta) has been dropped by the author. AB 2614 would have prohibited the Department from denying a commercial cannabis license to a person with an out-of-state felony conviction, disregarding the disqualifying felony language that Cal Chiefs agreed upon last year. After a strong negative response from the law enforcement community and the League of California Cities, the author has decided not to pursue the bill.

In the Senate, firearms policy is heating up. Legislation concerning ammunition background checks, large capacity magazines, and assault rifles are being pushed by legislative leaders and Cal Chiefs has been approached to weigh in on the conversation. Currently, our firearms committee is reviewing each proposal and relaying questions and concerns to the authors of each bill. Many of the concerns chiefs have identified surround ensuring law enforcement is not impeded by new regulatory hurdles, and that any additional burdens on the public are offset by significant gains in public safety.

Overall, the Legislature has been fairly receptive to Cal Chiefs’ input on firearms matters. Many of the measures, including the bill to prohibit large capacity magazines (SB 1446 by Senator Hancock), already provides exemptions for active and retired law enforcement. Additionally, Cal Chiefs was successful in negotiating an amendment to SB 869 by Senator Hill, which would require all law enforcement, when leaving a vehicle, to store handguns in a locked container or secured in the trunk of the vehicle. The amendment will exempt active, on-duty officers engaged in a crime or crime scene.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions!