As Southern California experiences its super bloom, the state Capitol is experiencing a legislative super boom. Legislators introduced 2,696 bills this year, and Cal Chiefs is actively monitoring 316 of those bills impacting public safety and frontline law enforcement. While that may only be just over ten percent of this year’s introduced legislation, included in these 316 bills are efforts to stymie our communications with the Department of Homeland Security (SB 54, now on the Senate Floor), require juvenile access to counsel before questioning (SB 395) and require departmental surveillance technology policies to be approved by city councils and publicly available (SB 21).

With each legislative session being a two-year session, we are on track to oppose as many bills during the 2017-18 session as we did during the 2015-16 legislative session, which immediately followed events in Ferguson, MO creating a demand for legislation like AB 953. This year’s set of opposed bills, however, is more diversified. Multiple bills on POBR and employee orientation (AB 52, AB 887, AB 1298) have garnered our opposition. With the Legislature’s unofficial goal of opposing the new Administration, we have seen more bills focused on restricting law enforcement cooperation with federal counterparts (SB 54, AB 1578). And, with PERS reform returning year after year (some may say like a dog returning to its own vomit), multiple bills to both limit PERS and divest PERS have been introduced. Despite their intents, all of these bills could have devastating effects on local government budgets (AB 20, SCA 8, SCA 10).

This week marked the first week of contentious bills passing through their respective house’s public safety policy committees. With committee membership highly in favor of urban democrats, law enforcement opposition is often drowned out by the growing number of niche advocacy groups. This reality, however, has not deterred our strong support of pro-public safety bills going through these committees, or our strong opposition to bills like the ones discussed above. Instead, it has required law enforcement groups to develop new partnerships and enter nontraditional coalitions to develop more universal support or opposition to legislation. While we have always partnered with our traditional allies in local law enforcement and government, the liberalization of the public safety committees has pushed Cal Chiefs to partner with the business community, organized labor, religious leaders, community based organization, and others.

We are preparing for these more contentious bills to come up in committee after this year’s legislative spring recess, which spans from April 6th-17th. Keep your eyes open for legislative alerts urging calls to your elected officials as well as targeted requests. And most important, don’t forget to register for this year’s Legislative Day on May 10th. A uniformed presence at the Capitol can stop some of these bad bills from going through and give a push to some of our supported legislation.

As always, please don’t hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.