As political eyes turn toward November, one ballot initiative is giving democratic campaign strategists extra heartburn: Gavin Newsom’s “Safety for All Act,” a gun control initiative that is sure to bring opponents, mostly Republicans, out in droves. For Democrats in challenged seats, the initiative brings an added threat to their position. But thanks to our new initiative laws, policymakers can ask the proponents of an initiative to remove their initiative from the ballot of the issue is being addressed by the legislature. The result? More than thirty firearms bills going through the Legislature in one year aimed at pressuring Newsom to drop his initiative.

Originally, the “counter” package of bills was introduced in the Senate. At the time, the Assembly was in transition, and remained mainly silent, although a few individual Assemblymembers, like Assemblymember Cooper, did introduce several measures. Now that there is a new leader in the Assembly, Anthony Rendon, there is an emerging number of competing bills. Wars between the two houses in the Legislature are nothing new, but when combined with an issue as controversial as gun regulation, there are sure to be fireworks. Cal Chiefs’ Firearms Committee, chaired by Chief Rudy Escalante from Capitola, continues to meet with legislative leaders to make sure measures that enhance public safety receive our support, and those that inhibit law enforcement capabilities are amended or dispatched.

Cal Chiefs currently supports a handful of measures. Legislation to provide for gun violence research, protect against straw purchases, and track ghost guns have all received an endorsement by Cal Chiefs. Assembly Bill 1869, authored by Assemblymember Melissa Melendez, has been a top priority for Cal Chiefs. This bill undoes the Prop 47 reduction of firearms thefts under $950 – which is most firearms! – to a misdemeanor. Instead, AB 1869 would allow voters to make ANY theft of a firearm a felony again. Hopefully, this becomes the first blow of many against Prop 47.

Legislation regarding definitions of assault weapons, ammunition background checks, gun lending, and large capacity magazines are among the most controversial. Cal Chiefs is engaged in discussion around our concerns, and suggesting potential amendments when feasible. Chief Rudy Escalante came to Sacramento this week to meet with senior policy consultants, Assemblymember Ting, and Assemblymember McCarty to discuss several of the Assembly gun bills.

Assemblymember Ting is the author of AB 2607, which would expand the persons who can request a gun violence restraining order (GVRO). As originally, established by AB 1014 in 2013, only immediate family members and law enforcement can request a GVRO. Not even halfway into the first year of implementation, AB 2607 would expand that list to include teachers, mental health workers, and co-workers. Cal Chiefs has made it clear that it is too soon to start expanding the GVRO process, but has been helpful in providing feedback on the current process.

As the onslaught of firearms legislation continues to grow, Cal Chiefs continues to engage with legislators with the guidance of our Firearms Committee. As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us!