Hundreds of bills have been voted on over the last several weeks, and hundreds more will be resolved when the Legislature meets next week for the final three days of the 2015-16 legislative session. Most of the big ticket items this year were decided early, leaving little expectations for an exciting finish. However, there are still dozens of bills that impact law enforcement still under consideration that Cal Chiefs is working. Even small changes to the law have the potential to create drastic consequences with regards to policing a state as large and complex as California.

A number of positive pieces of legislation recently passed the Legislature and have made it to the Governor’s desk thanks in large part to the heavy lobbying efforts of Cal Chiefs and other law enforcement advocates. AB1785 addresses the loophole in California law that allows drivers to use their cell phone for purposes other than communication. Instead, this bill would prohibit a driver from holding and operating a handheld electronic device while driving, no matter what use. Additionally, the Senate just approved AB 1993, which would require companies like Facebook, Google, and Apple to provide a point of contact to law enforcement for the purpose of responding to warrants and emergency requests for information. Both bills faced considerable opposition from major business and technology associations, and narrowly passed with support from members of both political parties. Additional bills supported by Cal Chiefs that are moving to the Governor’s desk include:

- AB 2147 allows law enforcement to impound a vehicle used in a crime related to prostitution.
- SB 6 prevents cop-killers from medical parole eligibility.
- SB 869 sets standards for storing firearms in a vehicle.
- SB 1182 makes it a felony to possess “date rape” drugs with intent to commit sexual assault.

Cal Chiefs has also been working diligently to prevent measures from becoming law that would be detrimental to our public safety goals. The bill to allow homeless individuals to sleep in their cars, AB 718, was scheduled to be heard before the end of session until Cal Chiefs and the League of Cities began inundating Senators with phone calls and lobbying visits. At this point, it is unlikely the author will make an attempt to hear the bill since support has dwindled. Another bill Cal Chiefs has been working to defeat is AB 2835, which prescribes a costly and mandatory orientation for all new government employees. Heavily backed by unions, AB 2835 is opposed by school administrators, counties, cities, and special districts. While these measures still can be defeated in the Legislature, several other very concerning bills are already destined for the Governor’s desk. SB 443, concerning civil asset forfeiture, is also moving towards the Governor’s desk. As reported in our last Capitol Update, Cal Chiefs is neutral on this bill after significant amendments were taken by the author.

In the upcoming weeks, the Cal Chiefs leadership will be meeting with the Governor to discuss a number of problematic bills already on his desk. Among the bills Cal Chiefs will be discussing with the Governor is AB 2298, which requires the notification of all adults entered into the CalGang database. While a recent state audit criticized numerous components of CalGang, adult notification was not one of the recommended changes and is still highly problematic in respect to the investigatory nature of a gang database. Cal Chiefs will also be discussing SB 1052, which would prevent any juvenile from waiving their Miranda rights until they’ve spoken with counsel. Finally, we will be discussing AB 2792, which seeks to require law enforcement to provide public information regarding any partnerships undertaken with ICE, and has the potential to burden departments with additional reporting. These three bill are among the top issues for all law enforcement groups – DA’s, sheriffs, police – and each will be discussed with the Governor’s office in September.
Overall, with the exception of a few bad bills, Cal Chiefs has won an overwhelming majority of our battles this year, and will be looking to finish the year with a few more positive updates.