

May 21, 2020

The following is a summary from Senator Pat Bates, Vice Chair of the Senate Special Committee on Pandemic Emergency Response, providing the key takeaways from the first committee meeting.

Two of the task force's goals are to boost California's testing capacity and to improve the supply chain so that samples can be collected quickly to evaluate results.

It is apparent there is a very high level of anxiety regarding privacy with regard to the pandemic and testing. Following the first meeting of the COVID-19 Pandemic Committee, there was significant input from the public about personal privacy as it relates to testing. This is a huge issue and will require judicial review. People are reporting they don't want to be tested because a positive test result could impact their ability to work.

Supply chain issues were also a significant part of the agenda. The committee discussion focused on encouraging the public to be tested and maintaining inventories of testing supplies going forward. The lack of adequate public testing slows opening businesses and allowing for public gatherings due to the governments requirement to meet standards identified by "reported numbers." It was also noted that access to testing in low-income, venerable, LGBTQ and rural communities continues to be problematic.

There are some communities such as Madera County, that to date, do not have equipment required for rapid testing. To identify outbreaks and hotspots, rapid testing followed by timely contact tracing is key to containment. Testing, along with supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for immediate and future use are imperative. Following review of what the State has done, and what we could do better, will be incorporated into an emergency preparedness program for the future.

As we continue to shelter at home, Senator Bates has concerns about the current state of the economy. With the current estimated budget deficit of around \$58B, requiring the State to remain closed for much longer makes it even more difficult for individuals and businesses to recover.

The committee is structured to address the State's ability to operate now as well as going forward as a result of COVID-19. In addition to formulating a strategic emergency plan, the committee findings will be used to introduce new legislation for the State so they can be better prepared in the future.

To allow ample time for new COVID Bills, all Senators have been requested to trim new legislation to focus on critical issues in their communities. Senator Bates is moving forward with an emergency preparedness bill, SJR11. This bill is directed to improve public safety during the decommissioning of the San Onofre nuclear power plant while moving waste away from large populations.

She is also introducing an environmental bill SB1090 that addresses the safety issues associated with bluff erosion along the coast. In addition, Senator Bates continues to fight the opioid addiction problem, and the misuse of funds received by some facilities that promise addiction recovery. This issue is recognized as an ongoing problem. Since 2014, the Senator has been fighting to regulate sober living homes and will continue this session with SB863.

State Senator Pat Bates represents California's 36th Senate District in Orange and San Diego Counties. Sen. Bates serves as Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Vice Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee,

and is a member of the Rules Committee, among several committee appointments. She was recently appointed Vice Chair of the Senate Special Committee on Pandemic Emergency Response which held its first meeting on May 6th.