

Hundreds of advocates urge Gov. Newsom to expand SB91

BILL SET TO EXPIRE JUNE 30; STATE BUDGET DEADLINE LOOMS

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CALIFORNIA—A total of 675 leaders from across California convened on Zoom June 3 in an effort to urge California Gov. Gavin Newsom to extend and expand Senate Bill 91.

SB91, which went into effect in January, was the follow-up to Assembly Bill 3088's eviction moratorium. It also outlined a state rental assistance program, including changes such as prohibiting consideration of Covid-19 rental debt as a negative factor for prospective tenants.

But the bill is set to expire on June 30, and while talks have been ongoing about extending it, few details have been released to the public. This prompted the [Industrial Areas Foundation](#) (IAF), a network of faith and community-based organizations, to hold the June 3 meeting.

Hundreds of individuals and representatives of various California IAF organizations attended, including local organization [Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action](#) (COPA).

Attendees advocated for improvements to the bill, including extending the moratorium until the end of 2021, expanding eligibility and allowing more flexibility in distribution.

“These actions are critical to preventing our families from venturing into the overwhelming homelessness crisis,” said Raymon Cancino, CEO of Community Bridges and a leader with COPA.

Cancino reminded everyone in attendance that the state budget is due on June 15—less than a week from the publishing of this article—and so action is needed as soon as possible.

California Assemblymember Miguel Santiago joined the meeting briefly, showing his support and outlining what must be done to push things through. Santiago explained that an entirely new bill cannot be created; that would require an “urgency clause” and a number of votes that cannot currently be met.

Instead, organizers should look into budget trailer bills—measures that accompany state budgets, in theory enacting changes to the law.

“We’re eager to do [this] one more time so that families are not left out on the street,” Santiago said. “But I will say, we’re going to need strong partnerships from you folks, because I think this time is more of a challenge.”

Assemblymember David Chiu reported at the meeting that discussions were ongoing between Newsom, Speaker Anthony Rendon and Senate President Pro-Tem Toni Atkins. But it is unclear where those conversations are, he said.

“We still have not finished the details,” Chiu said. “There needs to be legislative changes... in order for us to extend the protections, change the rules, and hopefully tighten up any issues we’ve seen in recent months.”

On Tuesday, California IAF released an additional statement further urging Newsom and state legislators to extend the moratorium without a preemption. Local COPA organizer Mayra Bernabe said they have heard rumors of a 60-day extension that includes a preemption barring local governments from acting to extend their own moratoriums.

“If the extension is any shorter than 6 months, we want to be sure it gives local governments the flexibility to enact additional protective measures,” Bernabe said.

COPA leaders met Tuesday night to send emails and do phone banking to state representatives. Bernabe said they also wanted to put pressure on the [Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors](#) to also consider a local extension, which other counties and cities have already done.

“We already have a big homelessness crisis in Santa Cruz County,” she said. “If this is not extended longer ... we can expect a wave, a tsunami of homelessness. There are many out there who are on the brink, or will be evicted soon. We’re trying to get in front of this and prevent it.”

Bernabe added that thousands of households in the county are currently behind on their rent. Many did pay rent, but had to borrow money, take out loans and max out their credit cards—and that’s not even considering the upcoming months.

“A lot of families are so fearful, they’re just counting down the days until they are going to be on the streets. And that’s unacceptable,” she said.

At the June 3 meeting Carolyn Winston, an IAF leader and member of St. Brigid Catholic Church in Los Angeles, urged people to contact their legislators before the June 15 budget deadline.

“The window is closing, but we have an opportunity to take action to impact legislative decisions,” Winston said. “Our actions influence their decision-making. Together we can effect change.”