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The 2026 Legislative Session is drawing to a close today ending the 2-year legislative session. Typically, in the second year of session, the Legislature's work ends soon after midnight on August 31 as most bills cannot be taken up later.

However, this year last minute budget proposals and a failed effort to pass major utility wildfire liability reform kept members in Sacramento well into September 1.

It has been a busy year for CCASLA. An update on CCASLA's work follows.

Zone 0

For over a year, CCASLA, its Board Members, and its lobbying firm have worked on the implementation of AB 3074 (Friedman). Among other things, AB 3074 called for the creation of an "ember resistant zone" in the first 5 feet around homes. This evolved into the Board of Forestry's "Zone 0" regulation.

CCASLA has been engaged in the development of these regulations since March of 2025. In their original form, these regulations eliminated all vegetation in the first 5 feet of a home except for potted plants. It was also a de facto ban on trees in Zone 0 given stringent requirements that all tree limbs be kept 10 feet above the *ridge* of the roof of a home.

Over the last 17 months, CCASLA and other opponents of the regulation were able to secure amendments to the Zone 0 regulations allowing vegetation in Zone 0 as long as it meets certain height, spacing, and other criteria. Meanwhile restrictions on the placement of trees were loosened with branches being allowed no closer than 5 feet from a roof.

CCASLA pushed the Board of Forestry to adopt one more amendment which would have created an exception for limbs greater than 2 inches in size. These limbs are not significant sources of ignition risk. Moreover, CCASLA identified numerous jurisdictions across the state that require permits for the removal of large limbs for protected trees. This means that Zone 0 compliance could cost homeowners thousands of dollars. Unfortunately, the Board did not take this last amendment.

Nevertheless, significant progress has been made on a regulation that started as ban on all vegetation and trees in the first 5 feet of the home. Should the Board of Forestry reopen this regulation CCASLA can continue to push for a more nuanced approach to tree limbs.

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Wildfire

The Legislature and the Governor have been grappling with the impact of climate driven wildfires and their associated cost for years. In particular, the question of how to equitably pay for the liability associated with these fires has flummoxed Sacramento. As a result of the state's constitution, the default answer to the question has been that ratepayers for the state's three large investor owned utilities have born a significant portion of the costs associated with wildfires. As electric rates have climbed, this solution has been increasingly unpalatable.

In the final weeks of session, Governor Newsom proposed sweeping reforms to liability. Among other things the Governor proposed to end insurance subrogation, limit attorneys fees, limit the types of damages that utilities would be liable for, and limit liability for public infrastructure.

This proposal was met with absolute opposition from wildfire victims, consumer attorneys, and especially the insurance industry. Given the significance of these reforms and the late engagement by the Governor, the Legislature had little appetite for them.

Instead, the Legislature put a bill in print with incredibly modest reforms to liability and a handful of other minor changes to the law including limitations on utility executive compensation. The lack of liability reform coupled with new obligations for the utilities led to them opposing the proposal along with their employee union.

Consequently, the Legislature did not adopt major liability reform in 2026. Rumors abound about next steps. We will continue to monitor developments given that at various points these proposals included funding for community/landscape scale wildfire resilience work.

AB 2106 (Patel) – Certificate of Merit – Support

AB 2106 (Patel) would expand California's "certificate of merit" statute to include landscape architects.

The certificate of merit statute is intended to prevent frivolous lawsuits against practicing professionals. The law calls for the review of claims by a qualified consulting professional before it proceeds. The goal is to weed out baseless claims before they ever get tried in court.

However, the law today is flawed in two ways. First, a "qualified consulting professional" does not have to be licensed in California. In addition, landscape architects are not included in the law.

AB 2106 resolves both of these issues. CCASLA has supported AB 2106 which passed and was signed into law on August 27.



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AB 1796 (Jackson) – Interior Design Professionals – Oppose

The long-running fight over whether interior design professionals should be licensed in California continued in 2026.

In 2024, proponents of this concept attempted to force the issue as part of CAB and LATC's sunset review. CCASLA opposed that effort because the proponents had not properly justified the need for licensure.

This year, AB 1796 (Jackson) would have established a license for interior designers and made CAB responsible for administering that license while disciplining and enforcing against interior design professionals. The bill would have added a seat to the CAB for an interior design professional.

CCASLA joined AIA and other licensed professionals in opposing AB 1796. CCASLA supports licensure when it is needed to protect the health safety and welfare of the public. Landscape architects do work every day that could impact the public on a community scale. The work of interior designers is important, but is also largely overseen by other design professionals including architects and engineers.

AB 1796 did not get a hearing in the Senate Business and Professions Committee and died earlier this year.

AB 2494 (Rogers) – State Forests: Forest Management

AB 2494 (Rogers) revises the state's management policies for Demonstration State Forests (DSFs) and further establishes the goals, appropriate forestry techniques, research efforts, and other activities allowable in demonstration forests.

CCASLA supported this bill in 2026. It has passed and is currently pending the Governor's consideration. The Governor has until September 30 to sign or veto the bill.