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Diversity

LGBT, Minority Rights Focus of Several Bills Signed in Last Legislative Session

(<http://www.kcet.org/news/agenda/diversity/lgbt-minority-rights-focus-of-several-bills-signed-in-last-legislative-session.html>)

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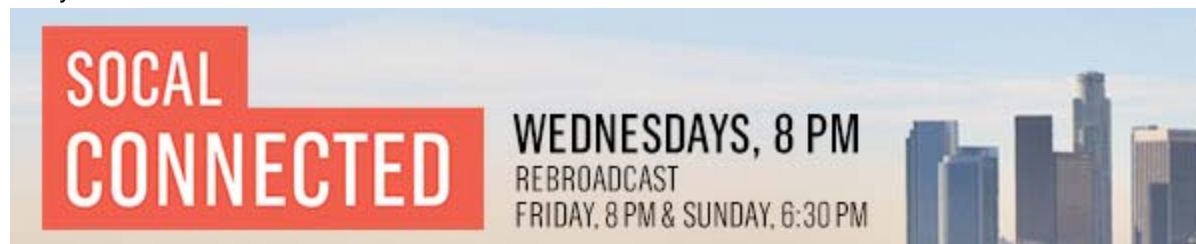
Over the past year, Gov. Jerry Brown has signed and vetoed various bills related to human, civic, LGBT, and minority rights, up until Sep. 30. Seen in this photo, protesters gather in San Francisco's Castro District in the midst of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn DOMA in 2013. | Photo: **Eric Wagner/Flickr/Creative Commons License**

When KCET launched this government policy blog in the summer, a point was made to look at **the intersection of policy and diversity**. After all, California is one of the most diverse states in the country and has traditionally been a bellwether for LGBT issues.

At the state level, Governor Jerry Brown just wrapped up the latest session by signing hundreds of bills, many that we found to be related to diversity. In attempt to see the bigger picture, we've organized many of them below and we will continue to track future developments in government using policy to make California

a place for people from all walks of life.

Story Continues Below



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Signed Legislation

AB 2501: Eliminates Gay and Trans Panic Defenses

Assemblymember Susan Bonilla's bill works to protect LGBT victims of crime by putting an end to gay and trans "panic defenses" -- defenses used in court to exempt or reduce penalties for perpetrators of a crime. Defendants currently employ these protective tactics as a way to find probable reason for acting in such a manner. The result is that defendants are often able to justify discriminatory actions based on the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity. Signed into law, this bill will ensure that **defendants cannot use "panic defenses"** in murder, manslaughter, or lesser crimes, according to Equality California, the largest LGBT advocacy organization in California that co-sponsored the bill.

AB 1951: Adds Gender Neutral Option for Parents on Birth Certificates

Beginning Jan. 1, 2016, same-sex couples will be able to fill out the following options to reflect the accurate gender identity and relationship to a child: **mother, father, and a gender-neutral option**. Currently, there are two fields designated for a child's birth mother and father. The new option would put an end to having LGBT couples forcibly decide between placing one partner in the "mother" and the other in the "father" field. Couples will instead have the chance to declare themselves as a mother, father, or simply a "parent." The bill was authored by Assemblymember Jimmy Gomez.

In an earlier interview with KCET, Jim Faulker, spokesperson for Equality California, explained that the law will **hopefully reflect the diversity of California families** and match the proper gender identity of LGBT on birth certificates.

SB 396: Removes Discriminatory Language from California's Law Books

This bill, authored by Senator Kevin de Leon, would repeal the provisions of Proposition 187, which was passed by voters in 1994 but later deemed unconstitutional.

Prop 187 denied undocumented immigrants basic rights to public education, health care, and other services in California. Although the proposition was unconstitutional and never enforced, the language still remains in California law. SB 396 removes the proposition's hostile language from state law.

AB 2102: Collects Language Data for Healthcare Professionals

AB 2102 is Assemblymember Phil Ting's second language access bill, signed by Gov. Jerry Brown. The bill helps put California on the road to having a more culturally appropriate and sensitive healthcare workforce by collecting language access and demographic data for different healthcare occupations (registered nurses, nurse practitioners, respiratory care providers) in California.

The data may help the state identify and eventually resolve communication barriers that may exist between limited English proficiency patients and care providers.

Currently, more than 40 percent of Californians speak another language at home, and an estimated 7 million Californians speak English "less than very well," **according to the Office of Assemblymember Ting.**

"More Californians than ever before have health insurance," said Ting. "But this growth in coverage through Covered California may not lead to better health while communication barriers persist. We have an obligation to act to ensure good health outcomes for limited English speaking Californians."

The bill is sponsored by the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network and the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California.

AB 496: Mandates LGBT Training, Cultural Competency for Healthcare Providers

AB 496, authored by Assemblymember Richard Gordon, provides cultural competency training and a discussion of LGBT issues for health care providers. LGBT patients often experience unfair or inadequate treatment due to the inconsistency of health providers whose employees have not gone through special cultural competency training on LGBT issues. The bill would make it a requirement for providers to receive training and provide adequate services to address the needs of the LGBT community.

AB 1577: Requires Preferred Gender Identity on Death Certificates

Beginning July 1, 2015, a person in charge of completing a certificate of death would be required to accurately record a deceased individual's sex as their preferred gender identity.

Known as California's Respect After Death Act, the bill was authored by Speaker of the Assembly Toni Atkins and sponsored by Equality California and Transgender Law Center. It grants protections to transgender people and ensures that their preferred gender identity will be accurately reflected and identified on death certificates.

"The basic idea of the bill is to ensure that transgender people are respected after they pass by ensuring accurate death certificates that reflect authentic identity," Jo Michael, legislative associate at Equality California, **told KCET in an earlier interview.**

AB 2646: Protects Minority Groups from Discriminatory Laws

AB 2646 is designed to prevent the enactment of discriminatory state or local laws by making it easier for minorities to challenge them. While the state and federal constitutions prohibit discriminatory laws, this bill explicitly makes it unlawful to enact a rule that hinders the political agency of any minority group. The bill's author, assemblymember Phil Ting, has said he believes this will be useful in challenging discriminatory ballot measures.

"Under the bill, discriminatory statutes or ordinances can be challenged in court. The enacting body would be required to show the law is not discriminatory and serves a 'compelling' government interest."

Vetoed Bill

AB 1565: Authorized Grants for Sensitivity Training for Veteran Services

A bill that would have authorized grants to nonprofit organizations in California for the benefit of culturally competent and sensitive training relating to LGBT issues was vetoed by Gov. Jerry Brown. The organizations would then be directed to specifically provide services to LGBT veterans. "I appreciate the author's desire to focus on the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender veterans, but creating a new grant program without a funding source is premature," Gov. Brown said in **his veto message**.

If funding is identified in the future for a similar program, the California Department of Veterans Affairs would be a better entity to address the issue, Brown added.