



Update from CAOC Samantha Helton

CAOC DEPUTY POLITICAL DIRECTOR

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A successful political year for consumer attorneys

THE 2023/2024 POLITICAL CYCLE WILL BE INTERESTING, WITH LOOMING INITIATIVES TO GUT PAGA AND CAP CONTINGENCY FEES

In Los Angeles and across the state, the consumer attorney community had an incredible political season in 2022. Thanks to the engagement of dedicated attorneys, we have real wins to celebrate, as pro-civil justice champions were elected across the Los Angeles area.

The 2023 legislators were sworn in on December 5 and includes new Los Angeles members: Senator Lola Smallwood Cuevas, Senator Caroline Menjivar, Assemblymember Rick Zbur, Assemblymember Josh Lowenthal and Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo, who pulled off an incredibly close race to flip a seat from Republican to Democrat. These new Los Angeles delegation members join the special election wins we picked up earlier in the year; Assemblymember Isaac Bryan and Assemblymember Tina McKinnor.

Senator Smallwood Cuevas was the Director of the Center for the Advancement of Racial Equity at Work at the UCLA Labor Center. She served as a researcher and political organizer for SEIU Local 1877 before joining the faculty at UCLA. To deal with disparities in union membership and skilled labor opportunities, Smallwood Cuevas founded the LA Black Worker Center to increase access to quality jobs, reduce employment discrimination and improve industries that employ Black workers. She has a deep understanding of how the civil justice system is necessary for the protection of workers. Her Senate district covers portions of west and south Los Angeles and includes the communities of Culver City, Mar Vista and Westchester.

The district was previously represented by Senator Sydney Kamlager, who successfully ran for the U.S. House of Representatives seat previously held by Los Angeles' new mayor, Karen Bass.

Assemblymember Schiavo is a champion for working people and for the civil justice system. She was an organizer with California Nurses Association and a staff member for SEIU, UNITE-HERE, the AFL-CIO and the San Francisco Labor Council. She is the co-founder of the West Valley Homes YES, an organization serving the homeless and advocating for affordable housing and tenant protections. She defeated the incumbent Republican, Suzette Valladares, who has consistently opposed civil justice legislation. The Republican Party spent heavily in the district to return Valladares to the Assembly. Valladares had contributions from corporate interests, including oil companies, insurance interests and pharmaceutical companies. Meanwhile, Schiavo was strongly supported by labor and civil justice organizations. Her Assembly district includes the communities of Santa Clarita, Chatsworth, Porter Ranch, Granada Hills and Northridge.

As we look to the new year, we are anxiously awaiting Speaker Anthony Rendon's appointments of chairs and committee members, especially the Assembly Judiciary Committee, where the previous chair Mark Stone did not run for re-election. Speaker Rendon, who is also a member of the Los Angeles delegation and has worked closely with local attorneys, will transition the role of

Speaker to Robert Rivas in June 2023. We're looking forward to continuing a strong consumer justice-focused relationship with Speaker Rivas.

The 2023/2024 political cycle will be another interesting one, with looming initiatives to gut PAGA and cap contingency fees. Term limits will also cause another deluge of incumbents, leaving open seats in 2024, this time in the Senate. In addition to being incredibly expensive because of the large territory and the number of voters, open Senate seats create a domino effect that will lead to additional vacancies in the Assembly. We're actively monitoring races already shaping up and are grateful for our members who give their time to educate their local legislators through our grassroots program. To join the consumer attorney community's effective and engaging grassroots program, please email Mark Wirth at markwirthca@gmail.com.

We're grateful for the wins we've accomplished together and will continue to keep you updated as the political landscape continues to take shape in 2023.

Samantha Helton serves as CAOC's Deputy Political Director, responsible for coordinating CAOC's political and fundraising efforts. She earned degrees in history and government from CSU, Sacramento. Before joining CAOC she served as the California Democratic Party Progressive Caucus Communications and Media Officer, President of Sacramento County Young Democrats and co-chair of the CYD Progressive Caucus.