

Legislative Report

November 5, 2013

By Bill Fraser

The California Legislature is now out of session and will not reconvene until the new session begins in January. All the geologically-related bills that AEG was following closely were signed by the Governor.

SB 152, sponsored by BPELSG, passed the legislature and was signed by the Governor. The bill essentially revises the licensure law for Geologists to be consistent with existing law for engineers. Most notably the bill requires written contracts be executed for most geologic work, as well as several other minor changes to geology licensure law.

SB 135 was passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor. SB 135 authorizes a Statewide Seismic Early Warning system to be developed in California. The early warning system relies on early interpretation of P-waves to predict the initiation of a large earthquake, allowing several tens of seconds of warning before the arrival of the damaging S-waves. While few would object to this monitoring, the bill provided no funding for the network. Hopefully a funding source will surface, but the fiscal turmoil in Washington may preclude significant federal funding in the near future.

SB 4 was passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor. The bill requires regulation of the practice of hydraulic fracturing to enhance petroleum recovery. SB 4 was one of seven bills initially proposed, the other six being killed in committee. The bill requires a level of environmental review of the practice at a time when the Monterey Shale has been identified as a major petroleum resource recoverable by hydraulic fracturing techniques. The bill was amended days before approval causing several environmental groups to drop their support. While the quality of the environmental protection provided by this law ultimately will depend on its implementation, I understand that the law provides for many tens of new civil service positions within the Division of Oil and Gas.

While legislative issues are certainly important, many licensure issues are determined administratively within BPELSG. It is pretty clear that groups representing Professional Engineers exercise a presence in these discussions. As such, the Legislative Committee will continue to attend BPELSG meetings and advocate for our profession.