

Governor Newsom Vetoes SB 702 (Limón), a Setback for Transparency and Accountability in Gubernatorial Appointments

SACRAMENTO, CA (October 10, 2023) — Governor Gavin Newsom has vetoed SB 702, Authored by Senator Monique Limón and sponsored by Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE), a deeply disappointing outcome in the push for greater transparency and accountability in gubernatorial appointments.

The bill would have required the office of the Governor to create an annual report on the demographic information currently being collected on individuals appointed by the Governor that year. This report would serve as a tool to highlight which voices and communities are missing from decision-making tables and offer concrete policy recommendations to diversify boards and commissions across the state.

“I am disheartened by the veto of SB 702, which would have provided the public with more transparency about who is being appointed to our state boards and commissions,” said Senator Limón. “This legislation passed through both houses unanimously with bipartisan support and is in line with the goal of appointing diverse candidates. The concern expressed in the veto message regarding using self-reported data is inconsistent given our state regularly uses self-reported data for many different state agencies for resources like tax credits, disability insurance, and in the appointment of our judicial courts. I am thankful to my sponsors, HOPE and the California Like Me Coalition, for their unwavering support. It is my hope that one day our boards and commissions in this state will reflect the diversity of our state.”

“Given the Governor’s commitment to creating a California for All and improving opportunities for underrepresented communities, this veto is a missed opportunity to capture and track demographic information that would help ensure all Californians are represented across influential state boards and commissions which make decisions directly affecting underserved communities, including women, communities of color, Californians with disabilities, and those who have served in the military,” said Helen Torres, CEO of HOPE.

“To achieve equity and address racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in state appointments, we must start with the data necessary to establish a baseline and measure progress. As a Governor who recognizes the importance of data in informing his decision-making, investing in a realistic, cost-effective mechanism for acquiring data to measure appointment progress would be the smart choice for California,” added Ms. Torres.

Currently, the state’s Judicial Council collects and releases demographic data relative to gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran and disability status for court justices and judges. In Illinois, Governor J.B. Pritzker [enacted a similar measure](#) to SB 702 and has seen consistent improvement in diversity over the past few years since its enactment.

This approach to creating more transparency in Government is also gaining traction in local governments in California.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Just last week, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted a motion modeled after SB 702 titled Promoting Diversity in County Commission Appointments, requiring the Board of Supervisors to publish an annual demographic report of appointments made. Mayor Karen Bass voiced her support for SB 702 and recommended the Governor adopt the bill.

This is the third time HOPE has sponsored and reintroduced a version of SB 702, which previously had passed within the state legislature only to receive a veto from Governor Newsom. In his veto letter, the Governor cites that the demographic information specified for reporting in this bill is optional and self-reported by candidates, and that the report would not necessarily accurately reflect the diversity of appointees.

Optional and self-reported demographic information is how all government agencies currently collect data by which important statewide and national decisions are made, including the U.S. Census and other government data sources. HOPE believes the potential for slight inaccuracy should not undermine the transparency we should strive for in our government officials and agencies.

The Governor also cites that his office is currently working with community partners and stakeholders to build a diverse qualified pool of candidates, which HOPE commends and applauds. While Governor Newsom has made great strides in appointing more women and people of color to these important and influential roles, more can be done to ensure this good work continues and is protected in future administrations.

HOPE's preliminary analysis of the appointments made in 2023 shows that while some gains have been made for Latino, Black, and AAPI Californians, they remain vastly underrepresented. White men continue to hold the plurality of these positions at 27%.

"This decision is a loss to our state's ability to live out our values of diversity and inclusion in our government and is ultimately a loss to the Governor who would be able to showcase the work he has done so far and set up future governors to uphold his standards of diversity and transparency," added Ms. Torres.

"We are grateful to Senator Monique Limón, the supermajority of senators and assembly members who voted to support SB 702, and our diverse coalition of over 30 prominent statewide organizations dedicated every day to advancing justice and equity in our state. We look forward to further discussions on increasing transparency in the composition of appointments. Ensuring all communities have a voice in key decision-making tables is part of HOPE's longstanding mission. We remain motivated and ready to improve equity in the state's commitment to a California for All. We believe the wave of support for transparency in Gubernatorial appointments will only grow."

About Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) - HOPE® is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has empowered our communities through advocacy, Latina leadership training, and increasing knowledge on the contributions Latinas have made to advance the status of women for the past 32 years. To date, HOPE's innovative programming has served 65,000 Latinas and touched the lives of several thousand more through our advocacy. For more information on HOPE, please visit [Latinas.org](https://www.latinas.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).