

Hi, this is Chris Micheli with the Sacramento governmental relations firm of Aprea & Micheli and an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law in its Capital Lawyering program.

Today's podcast is looking at legislative branch support agencies. The first is the Office of Legislative Counsel. There are quite a number of important entities that support the work of the California Legislature. First and foremost is the Legislative Counsel.

It was founded in 1913, and it's a nonpartisan entity that drafts legislative proposals, prepares verbal and written legal opinions, and provides other confidential legal services to members of the Legislature and the Governor.

The Office of Legislative Counsel also provides computer services, data networking, and related customer services to the Legislature. The Legislative Counsel is Diane Boyer-Vine, who was appointed by the members of the Assembly and Senate, and receives such appointments at the start of each two-year legislative session.

The Legislative Counsel's Office services as legal counsel to the Legislature and its members, as well as the Governor and his or her staff, but no other constitutional officers. The Legislative Counsel assists members of the Legislature in the drafting of measures, providing legal opinions on various matters, and assisting the Legislature and its committees regarding issues before them.

Legislation cannot be introduced until it has been approved and drafted by the Legislative Counsel in proper bill format. Every piece of legislation and every amendment must be accompanied by a Legislative Counsel Digest, which summarizes existing law and describes how the measure changes existing law.

In addition, the Leg Counsel Bureau is responsible for maintaining a comprehensive database on California legislation and law. It's also responsible for maintaining various legislative indices and summaries of enacted legislation. There are over 80 lawyers working in the office.

Next, is the Legislative Analyst Office. The LAO has provided fiscal and policy advice to the California Legislature for over 75 years. It is well known for its fiscal and programmatic expertise and its nonpartisan analyses of the California State Budget.

This office serves as the eyes and ears of the Legislature to ensure that the executive branch of government is implementing legislative policy in a cost-efficient and effective manner.

The Legislative Analyst Office is overseen by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, JLBC, which is a 16-member bipartisan committee comprised of an equal number of Assembly Members and Senators. The LAO has a staff of over 40 analysts and support staff. These analysts cover several budget and policy areas.

One of the most important responsibilities of the LAO has been to analyze the governor's annual budget and to prepare a series of analyses, from the beginning to the

end of the California budget process, on overarching fiscal issues, as well as specific departmental budget proposals. The LAO offers its recommendations for legislative action in these budget and fiscal areas.

The LAO's documents help set the agenda for the work of the Legislature's fiscal committees, particularly the two budget committees, in developing the Legislature's version of a state budget. Staff of the LAO's office work with the legislative committees throughout the budget process, particularly the budget subcommittees, and they provide public testimony on their recommendations.

The LAO used to analyze pending legislation. However, due to significant budget cutbacks from Prop 140 in 1990, the LAO now only analyzes the state budget. They also provide recommendations for legislators on budget reforms and participate, along with the Department of Finance's staff, in all the budget subcommittees and full committee hearings of the Senate and the Assembly.

The LAO staff regularly testifies on its findings and recommendations when the Assembly and Senate hear the budget bill in their subcommittees, as well as in a Joint Budget Conference Committee. The LAO also has the role of preparing the ballot analyses for each measure that is submitted to the electorate on the statewide ballot.

The next entity is the California State Auditor, which is formally known as the Bureau of State Audits, or BSA. The BSA is headed by the State Auditor, who's appointed by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, JLAC. JLAC oversees the work of the State Auditor, and the State Auditor conducts independent financial and performance audits as directed by statute or by the JLAC.

This joint committee oversees the work of the auditor and the BSA itself. The Bureau of State Audits also administers California's Whistleblower Protection Act, and it may investigate alleged violations of law, as directed by JLAC.

The Bureau conducts audits at different levels of state and local governments based upon audit requests approved by JLAC, which is comprised of an equal number of Assembly Members and Senators.

All the audits and evaluations must be conducted in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards that are published by Comptroller General of the United States, as well as by the standards of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

The next entity is the California State Library and its California Research Bureau, the CRB. The CRB provides nonpartisan research services to the California Legislature, the Governor, and other elected state officials. These services by the CRB include preparation of reports on current policy issues, including case studies and examples, data analysis, as well as the development of legislative proposals.

The California Research Bureau is an arm of the California State Library, and it's involved in special projects and events with partners in the Legislature and various state

agencies. The CRB regularly publishes new studies and reports about matters of current legislative or administration interests.

The CRB provides specialized library services to its clients. It has an office in the California State Capitol, which is staffed by librarians with considerable expertise in the literature concerning current California policy issues. The office shares a commitment to providing quick, thorough, and discrete services.

The librarians have ready access to an extensive collection of reports, studies, and other materials concerning current and historical policy issues, as well as numerous electronic databases. In addition, the CRB convenes regular seminars and presentations by academics and think tank scholars who do work related to current public policy issues.

The last support entity is the California Law Revision Commission. The Law Revision Commission's official mission is to assist the California Legislature and the Governor by examining California laws and recommending needed reforms to those laws. The Law Revision Commission is an independent state agency that was created by California statute in 1953.

The Commission also recommends the repeal of statutes that have been held to be unconstitutional or whose legality has come into question. The Commission also reports to the Legislature on its studies, and it submits a list of topics to be studied, which requires approval of concurrent resolutions that are adopted by the two houses of the California Legislature.

I hope you found this brief review of legislative branch support agencies helpful.