

Where is California's Housing Legislation Coming from?

QUICK FACTS:

- After his election in 2018, Governor Newsom proposed that California strive to build 3.5 million homes by 2025, an average of 500,000 new homes per year.
- 64% of the enacted housing legislation was introduced by representatives from the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas.
- In an effort to increase housing production, state lawmakers introduced more than 150 housing-related proposals this past legislative session. From Inland county representatives, 11 bills related to housing were introduced and 1 was signed into law.

Introduction

In June of 2019, the Governor's office labelled California's high housing costs as a defining quality-of-life concern. The state's housing inequality and low rates of housing development have contributed to what is widely considered to be a crisis. Estimates of how much new housing is needed to alleviate this crisis range; Governor Newsom has proposed a goal of 500,000 new housing units per year for the next 7 years; the Department of Housing and Community Development claims California needs at least 180,000 new units annually. Housing production in the state has not exceeded 100,000 units in any single year since 2008, and has only surpassed 300,000 units twice since the 1950's.

Perhaps partly in response to this crisis, state lawmakers proposed more than 150 housing-related legislative bills during the last session. Given that different regions in the state might have different ideas about how to address this crisis, and considering that enacted legislation often applies statewide, this brief examines the geographic origin of proposals from the last session. Proposals from the Inland Counties were proportionately low compared to several other regions where rapid growth is also expected to occur in coming years.

Methodology

We assess the 2019 legislative cycle to determine the quantity and origin of California State Senate and Assembly housing

bills. To accomplish this, we utilize the California Legislative Information database.

For the purposes of this examination, we focus on housing bills. A housing bill is one that sufficiently impacts housing supply, demand, production or maintenance, or if the bill makes substantive changes to the requirements of previously enacted housing-related land use or zoning policies. Additionally, we analyze bills that relate to or impact commonplace housing crisis issues including homelessness, affordability and overcrowding.

Our examination is exclusive to Senate Bills (SB) and Assembly Bills (AB). Common proposals, like Assembly Constitutional Amendments (ACA) and Senate Resolutions (SR), are not included in our analysis. Additionally, bills primarily authored or introduced by Senate or Assembly Committees are excluded from our analysis.

Results

Of 158 housing bills proposed in 2019's legislative cycle, 48 were enacted. The new legislation addresses a variety of housing issues including up-zoning, property taxes, accessory dwelling units, rent increases, and the collection and reporting of data. For example, the California State Senate passed SB-330 which streamlines the permit and approval processes for new housing. Additionally, AB-567, AB-671 and AB-881 promote

the development of accessory dwelling units or ‘granny-flats’. Table 1 shows the number of bills proposed and enacted by Assemblymember’s and State Senator’s geographic origin. Inland representatives proposed 11 of the 158 housing bills.

Table 1: California Senate and Assembly Proposed and Enacted Housing Legislation by Geographic Region

Region	Proposed Housing Legislation	Enacted Housing Legislation
Central Coastal	9	4
Central Valley	13	1
Los Angeles	48	17
Northern California	3	1
Orange County	10	1
Riverside-San Bernardino	11	1
Sacramento	3	2
San Diego	11	3
San Francisco	42	14
San Jose	8	4
Totals	158	48

Data adapted from the California Legislative Information Database

Members of the legislature’s housing committees and representatives from coastal areas introduced most of the state’s housing legislation during this last session. Members of the two legislative housing committees, despite comprising just 10% of the representatives in the Assembly and Senate, introduced 30% of the housing legislation during this legislative cycle.

Table 2 shows the percentage of enacted bills in these same regions, this time compared to that area’s approximate population share. The Los Angeles and San Francisco areas collectively account for approximately 45% of the state’s population, yet their representatives served as the primary authors of 64% of the enacted housing bills.

Riverside-San Bernardino, Orange County, and California’s Central Valley have low rates of housing bill approval when compared with population share. The disparity between population share and successful housing bills in Riverside-San Bernardino is the worst among the regions examined. Despite building 14% of the state’s new housing units in 2018, only 2% (1 of 48) of the successful State Senate and Assembly housing bills were primarily authored by a representative from the Riverside-San Bernardino area. The successful bill, AB-1010,

authored by Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella), allows Native American governing institutions to participate in affordable housing programs.

Table 2: Enacted Housing Legislation by Population Share

Region	% Population Share	% of Housing Bills Enacted
Central Coastal	6%	8%
Central Valley	7%	2%
Los Angeles	33%	35%
Northern California	5%	2%
Orange County	8%	2%
Riverside-San Bernardino	11%	2%
Sacramento	5%	4%
San Diego	8%	6%
San Francisco	12%	29%
San Jose	5%	8%
Totals	1.00	100%

Data adapted from the California Legislative Information Database

Conclusion

As the statewide housing crisis continues, absent a comprehensive, consensus-based approach, policy “fixes” might continue to occur through individual efforts emanating from the Senate and Assembly. In this brief we examined the areas of origin of the proposed and enacted state Senate and Assembly housing policy from the 2019 legislative cycle. Generally, large coastal areas proposed and successfully enacted more housing proposals than the Inland regions. Representatives from San Francisco were particularly prolific – San Francisco area representatives served as the primary authors of 29% of the state’s successful housing bills, despite containing only 12% of the state’s population. Riverside–San Bernardino was the most underrepresented area in California, along with the Central Valley and Orange County.

Our analysis raises two questions that might benefit from further research. First, to what extent are the enacted bills intended to address issues that might be germane to the Los Angeles or San Francisco areas only? Second, to what extent do those bills that have statewide application impact the Inland Counties? ■