Proposals for major revisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) did not make it through the 2013 session of the California Legislature. The Legislature was unable to devise changes that would reduce delays and frivolous lawsuits without jeopardizing the right to public input into and adequate judicial review of CEQA proceedings.

The lone CEQA amendment that passed was SB 743, which was approved by Governor Brown on September 27. It will ease the way for authorization of a new basketball arena in Sacramento and other large urban projects. SB 743 was opposed by CNPS and other environmental organizations. The bill includes provisions exempting some residential, employment center, and mixed-use development projects from the requirements of CEQA. It also provides that where CEQA does apply to those projects, aesthetic and parking impacts on an infill site within a transit priority area shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment.

While CEQA did escape major damage in 2013, the new law is another bad precedent in establishing exemptions from CEQA to accommodate large, politically supported projects.

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