

## EDITORIAL: All legislation should be in print for 72 hours



Sacramento Bee political columnist Dan Walters provided the perfect description for potentially bad legislation that appears during the frantic final hours before the state budget is written or before the Legislature adjourns.

“They’ve been dubbed ‘mushroom bills’ — grown in darkness, nourished in excrement,” Walters wrote in his March 17 column.

There are, however, proposals written in the bright light of day that could put an end to the terrible practice of passing unvetted bills inviting unintended consequences.

Earlier this month, Assembly Republicans announced a reform package that they said was aimed at making state government more effective and restoring public trust in the Capitol.

One plank of the GOP’s reform agenda is to provide more “sunshine” on what lawmakers and bureaucrats are doing. We applaud their efforts while acknowledging that the ruling Democrats would like nothing more than to continue business as usual — that is, largely working behind closed doors in consultation with lobbyists and wealthy political donors.

“Every time you read the paper, there is another story about bills being passed in the dead of night, politicians in scandal, or ridiculous bills that do nothing to make California a better place to live,” said Assembly Republican Leader Kristin Olsen of Modesto.

Olsen has proposed an Assembly constitutional amendment that would require all bills to be in print for 72 hours. The idea is to end the shameful “gut-and-amend” procedure in which legislation is replaced by an entirely different bill at the last second.

Democrats and their skills counter that requiring a 72-hour in print rule would amount to a timeout during which

momentum to get something done would run out of steam. They also claim that special interests could use the 72-hour window to exert pressure and work to block carefully crafted bills.

Some of these predictions might come to pass if Olsen's proposal becomes law. But lawmakers would adapt — they always do — and the public would be better served by having time to analyze and digest legislation.

We also support Assembly Bill 410, by Jay Obernolte, R-Big Bear Lake. His bill would mandate the online posting of all reports by state agencies that are given to the Legislature. This is already public information, but requiring the reports to be put online would remove significant barriers to public access.

The only way to stamp out mushroom bills is for citizens to rise up and demand that their representatives stop operating in secrecy. Call or email your Assembly member and state senator and let them know you stand behind these proposals by Olsen and Obernolte.

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