



# California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Notes

Whatever good intentions the 1970 bill creating the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), signed into law by then-Gov. Ronald Reagan, held out, it progressively worsened into its current state as a Berlin Wall to housing construction, as this damning paragraph from its [Wikipedia entry](#) explains.

“CEQA has been criticized for being abused (used for reasons other than environmental ones) to block, downsize, delay, or gain other concessions from new development. CEQA has even been used to block or delay projects that have positive environmental impacts, such as solar plants, wind turbines, bike lanes on pre-existing roads, and denser housing. One study found that 85% of CEQA lawsuits were filed by organizations with no record of environmental advocacy and 80% of CEQA lawsuits targeted infill development. CEQA has also been used by NIMBYs to block homeless shelters, student housing and affordable housing projects, by businesses to try to block competition, and by unions to force developers to use union workers.”

## CEQA in the Way? We'll Fix That

*From the March 21-25, 2022, NFIB California Main Street Minute*

- One does have to marvel at the breakneck pace the Legislature moved on [Senate Bill 118](#), which overrode a court order and rescued the admissions policies of UC Berkeley and all state universities from an enrollment freeze forced on it by another misuse of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In one day (March 14), SB 118 passed the Assembly 69-0, the Senate 33-0, and then signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom. The University resumed sending out letters of acceptance.

## Recent Reform Actions

- [Senate Bill 9 \(Atkins\)](#) lets property owners construct duplexes, and in some cases fourplexes, in most single-family-home neighborhoods statewide. Signed into law 2021.
- [Senate Bill 10 \(Wiener\)](#) which lets local city councils expedite construction of apartment complexes of up to 10 units near transit hubs and urban infill areas, including in single-family-home zones, gets stronger support. Signed into law 2021.
- [Senate Bill 423 \(Wiener\)](#) streamlining housing approvals and allowing for more multi-family housing developments. Signed into law 2023.
- [Assembly Bill 609 \(Wicks\)](#) exempts most urban housing projects from environmental reviews and [Senate Bill 607 \(Wiener\)](#) speeds up reviews for a range of projects, including infill housing. Folded into the state budget, which was signed into law June 30, 2025.