

Attempt to overhaul CEQA dead in the water

By David Siders, Sacramento Bee

A late-hour bid to overhaul the California Environmental Quality Act fell apart Thursday, with Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg saying the upper house will not take up the measure before the legislative session ends next week.

“The Senate will not take up comprehensive CEQA reform in the last days of the legislative session,” Steinberg, D-Sacramento, told reporters at the Capitol. “This law, for all of its strengths and its faults, is far too important to rewrite in the last days of the session.”

The announcement cheered environmentalists, who had been lobbying furiously against the bill.

The proposal, backed by a group of business interests and some lawmakers, would have limited the reach of California’s signature environmental law, insulating from litigation certain projects that comply with a city general plan or other planning document for which an environmental review already has been done.

“I’m relieved,” said Sierra Club California director Kathryn Phillips, who called the bill “one of the worst attacks on environmental protections that we’ve seen in the 40-year life of this law.”

State Sen. Michael Rubio, who had been seeking co-authors for the bill as recently as Wednesday, said Thursday morning – just hours before the announcement – that the legislation remained viable. Later, standing beside Steinberg, the Central Valley Democrat said, “We always have to read the dynamics of the building.”

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