

# More laws to be imposed on Californians starting Jan. 1

By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – Californians will no longer be able to carry handguns openly in public, buy alcohol at self-serve checkout stands or purchase shark fins for their soup under hundreds of new laws that take effect Jan. 1.

Other measures bar minors from tanning beds, allow students to be suspended for cyber-bullying and require booster seats for children in cars until they are 8 years old or at least 4 feet, 9 inches tall.

Despite another year of budget shortfalls, the 760 bills that Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law in 2011 included several that cost money. Among them: new funding for a bullet train and a campaign to boost enrollment for food stamps as the economy remains sluggish.

Some bills took effect immediately after the governor signed them. One allows an NFL stadium proposed for downtown Los Angeles to receive expedited legal review of any challenges over environmental issues. Another prohibits cities and counties from outlawing male circumcision.

Brown faced a backlash for signing some of the proposals, including one allowing illegal immigrants to receive private financial aid administered by California's public colleges. (Another permitting access to taxpayer-provided aid takes effect in 2013.)

Known as the California Dream Act, the pair of measures drew fire from the public and some lawmakers who consider them unfair to students born in the United States. But Assemblyman Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles, said his legislation recognizes

the value of young people who graduate from high school in California regardless of where they were born.

“It’s important for California and the future of our economy to take advantage of the investment we have made in these young men and women,” Cedillo said.

Brown was also criticized for signing a law requiring public schools to include the contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in history lessons and instructional material, although new textbooks for lower grades are not planned for three years.

One of the most contentious issues was the ban on the open carrying of handguns, which put California in the minority of states that have adopted such restrictions. Some gun-rights advocates say the new law will not keep them from appearing in public with weapons that are not covered by the ban.

“Law-abiding citizens will start openly carrying unloaded long guns in public because their basic and fundamental civil right to self-defense, as enumerated in the Second Amendment, is clearly being infringed upon,” said Yih-Chau Chang, a spokesman for the firearms advocacy group Responsible Citizens of California.

Assemblyman Anthony Portantino, D-La Canada Flintridge, said he introduced the measure in response to law enforcement officials who felt that public safety was jeopardized by gun owners wearing firearms on their hips at coffee shops and other public venues as they called attention to a right to bear arms.

#### **Laws taking effect also include:**

**Athlete safety:** requires school districts to develop a process for identifying cases in which students suffer concussions in sports mishaps and require a parent to give written permission for the athlete to return to the lineup.

**Audits:** gives the state auditor broad new powers to investigate misuse of taxpayer funds by cities and counties, in response to the financial scandal in the city of Bell.

**Autism:** requires health insurers to include coverage for autism.

**Baby food:** bans stores from selling expired infant food and formula.

**Bail:** requires that people extradited to California to face criminal charges face \$100,000 in bail in addition to any bail already issued for the underlying offense.

**Ballot measures:** requires all ballot initiatives and referenda to be decided in November general elections, which typically have higher turnout – and more liberal voters casting ballots – than do June primaries. Excludes measures placed on the ballot by the Legislature.

**Beer:** bars the importation, production and sale of beer to which caffeine has been directly added as a separate ingredient, in response to incidents in which young people have been hospitalized with severe intoxication after drinking the beverages.

**Bullet train:** provides \$4 million for planning work on a section of a high-speed rail system proposed between Los Angeles and San Diego.

**Child actors:** streamlines the process for obtaining state permission for minors to work in the entertainment industry by allowing parents to get temporary permits online rather than through the mail.

**Clemency:** requires governors to give prosecutors a chance to weigh in at least 10 days before acting on requests for commutation of prison terms. The law was proposed after former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger acted on his last day in office to

reduce a prison sentence for the son of former Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez.

**Cyber-bullying:** allows schools to suspend students for bullying classmates on social networking sites such as Facebook.