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Assembly acts on dozens of bills

Items passed include changes to high school exit exam, eliminating trans fats from school menus and warning labels on cloned food.

The Associated Press

The state Assembly is voting on hundreds of bills each day this week as lawmakers rush to meet a Friday deadline to send legislation to the Senate, which did not meet Tuesday. Both houses are back in action today.

Here are some of the bills acted upon:

GLOBAL WARMING --By a 44-26 vote, the Assembly sent the Senate a bill by Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, that would require coastal cities and counties to consider the impact of rising sea levels brought on by global warming when they amend their general plans. "If we bury our heads in the sand on this one we will drown," Laird said. "We need to plan for this. We need to be ahead of the curve."

GRADUATION EXAM -- State schools Superintendent Jack O'Connell would have to come up with additional ways that qualified students could get high school diplomas without passing the state graduation exam, under a bill by Assemblywoman Julia Brownley, D-Santa Monica, that was approved 44-26. Opponents complained that the bill would leave the state without a sure way to measure students' achievement levels, but supporters said relying only on the graduation exam tends to narrow schools' curriculum. "This is not watering down; this is broadening," said Assemblyman Gene Mullin, D-South San Francisco.

TOXIC TOYS --Toys and child care products could not contain a toxic chemical that has been linked to developmental problems. In a reversal, lawmakers narrowly passed a bill by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco, that would outlaw phthalates in products intended for children under the age of 3. AB 1108 passed 41-31 after Democrats surrounded the desk of Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally, D-Compton, who had abstained from voting.

GREEN BUILDINGS -- Commercial buildings built after July 1, 2012, would have to meet energy-efficient "green building" standards under a bill by Assemblyman Ted Lieu,

D-Torrance, that was sent to the Senate by a 43-28 vote. In a related measure, residential buildings also would be required to meet efficient standards under a bill by Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, that passed 44-28. Critics said both measures would hurt the economy through higher construction costs. State government buildings also would have to meet green building standards under a bill by Assemblyman Ira Ruskin, D-Redwood City, that went to the Senate on a 45-31 vote.

SCHOOL FOOD --Schools would have to take fried foods off their menus and phase out foods made with ingredients containing artery-clogging trans fats to receive increased state subsidies for free- and reduced-price meals, under a bill by Assemblywoman Jean Fuller, R-Bakersfield. A 69-0 vote sent it to the Senate.

IRAN INVESTMENTS --State employee retirement funds could no longer invest in foreign companies that do energy or defense-related business in Iran under a bill by Assemblyman Joel Anderson, R-La Mesa, that was approved 68-0. AB221 also would ban investments in companies that work with any Iranian organization labeled as a terrorist group. Supporters said California should make "socially responsible investments," while critics complained that sanctions generally do not sway foreign governments.

CLONED FOOD -- A bill by Assemblyman Ira Ruskin, D-Redwood City, would require warning labels on food made from meat or milk from cloned animals or their offspring. "Consumers should have the freedom not to spend money (for) or eat products that offend them," Ruskin said. A similar measure by Sen. Carole Migden, D-San Francisco, passed the Senate on Monday. Ruskin's bill passed on a 42-31 vote.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION --Schools would have to enforce anti-bias laws to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender students from discrimination under legislation by Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, D-Sherman Oaks. Supporters said students should not fear attending school, while critics said current law provides adequate protections. AB394 passed on a 45-28 vote.

STORE REBATES --Retailers would have to give consumers the rebates manufacturers offer so they do not have to mail in their receipts under legislation by Assemblyman Mike Feuer, D-Los Angeles. Supporters framed the issue as a consumer-protection measure that would ensure Californians get the rebates they deserve. Opponents said AB1673 would burden retailers. They also said manufacturers would stop offering rebates for lower prices in California. The bill passed on a 41-31 vote.

FLOOD CONTROL -- By a 39-34 vote, the Assembly rejected a bill by Assemblywoman Lois Wolk, D-Davis, that would have required the Department of Water Resources to develop a flood control plan for the Central Valley by 2011. The proposal would have required that local governments could not approve developments in flood zones unless they drafted local flood control plans. Opponents complained that the measure would stifle construction of affordable housing, but Wolk replied, "Affordable housing under 10 feet of water or 15 feet of water is not affordable." Lawmakers rescinded the vote, leaving the possibility the bill could be voted on again later this week.