CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH STANDARDS BOARD (OSHSB)

Stakeholder Roundtable Findings Report

Elevating Worker Access, Board Transparency, and Advisory Committee Integrity

Author: Ginger McElveen, Strategic Mgr.

Sessions: October 2026 Sacramento & Los Angeles

Executive Summary & Purpose

Guided by a core thesis of **improving transparency and efficiency through enhanced visibility**, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board (OSHSB) conducted statewide stakeholder roundtables in Sacramento and Los Angeles to evaluate agency procedures, digital rulemaking channels, and public accessibility. Grounded in our operational focus on **Process, Public, and People**- with particular emphasis on **The Public**- this initiative seeks to demystify Board procedures, widen the door for equitable participation, and ensure underrepresented workers actively shape California safety standards.

While stakeholders candidly addressed structural and cultural barriers, they also offered positive feedback- expressing appreciation for the dedication of career engineering staff, the collaborative technical depth of our advisory committees, and ongoing modernization efforts to streamline rulemaking.

1: Digital Infrastructure, Website Usability & Transparency

Stakeholders emphasized that technical and digital barriers significantly hinder public participation, making it difficult for outside groups without dedicated legal teams to track regulatory developments across agencies:

> *"It's currently just a consent calendar. We have to search consent calendars. We can't just run a keyword search. There's no way to find any information on the variance... It might be three years later, and so you have to search through a bunch of consent numbers to find a previous variance."*
>
> — Industry Representative

Siloed Digital Infrastructure & Website Confusion: Navigation across the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), and OSHSB is fragmented, obscuring the origin of rules, isolated draft text excerpts, and historical variance records.

> *"The Standards Board website is pretty primordial... And it's hard when you're looking for things because the standards board is working on things, the division is working on things, the DIR is working on things... Would it be possible that maybe whoever does it, [there could be] some central place where you could have a list of the three different places?"*
>
> — Industry Representative

Rollback of Text Transcripts: Discontinuing full meeting transcripts post-April 2024 places administrative and financial burdens onto non-profits, advocates, and workers- forcing them to search multi-hour videos to trace historical intent.

2: <u>Public Meeting Accessibility & Worker Inclusion</u>

Empirical Decline in Worker Participation: Stakeholders presented compelling quantitative evidence demonstrating a sharp collapse in frontline worker participation at Board meetings over recent years. Advocates invested significant time reviewing public meeting records to compile historical attendance and testimony data, presenting a visual analysis during the Sacramento roundtable that illustrated how previously robust worker engagement has dropped and remained at near-zero levels. Participants noted that this empirical trend underscores how procedural hurdles, changes in public comment windows, and perceived shifts in meeting atmosphere have effectively sidelined workers.

Rigid daytime meeting schedules and advance submission rules create structural participation hurdles for frontline workers and external technical experts:

> *"As nurses, we have various schedules... My shift nurses, they tend to work 3:00 to 12:00 back to back. It's very difficult for us... If there's a Zoom option for participation*

at the beginning of the meeting... we can schedule our lunch breaks or 15-minute breaks around that so we can get more engagement from healthcare workers."

— Union Representative

Daytime Schedule Constraints: Rigid 8:00–5:00 meetings lock out shift workers (such as nurses and industrial laborers) who cannot forfeit a full day's pay to travel and testify in person.

The 45-Day Presentation Rule Catch-22: Requiring public presentation materials 45 days in advance collides with meeting agendas posting only 10 days prior.

Need for Status-Neutral Protocols: Labor representatives and community advocates underscored that pervasive fears of employer retaliation, government surveillance, ICE raids and immigration-related risks create a severe chilling effect that keeps vulnerable workers from testifying in public forums. Instituting clear, multilingual status-neutral protocols at the opening of every Board meeting was recommended to rebuild trust and ensure all California workers can safely report workplace hazards.

3: <u>Advisory Committees & Policy Integrity</u>

Stakeholders offered strong praise for the dedication of career engineering staff and the collaborative technical depth of advisory committees, while expressing varied views on how pre-rulemaking committees should be governed:

Industry Requests for Early Scoping & Consensus: Employer and industry representatives advocated for expanded influence at the earliest stages of rulemaking- proposing formal pre-rulemaking "scoping" mechanisms and suggesting advisory committees should prioritize achieving broad industry consensus before advancing regulatory drafts.

Statutory Mandate & Public Health Imperatives: Labor advocates and Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) leadership cautioned that requiring consensus or early industry gatekeeping effectively grants regulated entities a veto over worker safety.

> *"Had we been required to reach consensus with the oil industry on standards [PSM], it would have never seen the light of day... The same could be said for our emergency silica rule... Had we been required to reach consensus with this industry, we would have not produced an emergency standard at all... We would have no ability to meet the crisis of silicosis rolling across California today."*
>
> — DOSH

Participants generally affirmed that balanced stakeholder input informs the processes used in the OSHSB Advisory Committee process.

4: <u>Procedural Governance & Accountability</u>

There was strong consensus among participants that a high level of confusion exists around the May 2026 and September 2026 Board Meetings where petitions were considered. To eliminate operational ambiguity when petition text or regulatory language is modified live during public meetings, stakeholders proposed Live Screen-Editing Protocol: all floor motions and text changes would be typed directly onto a shared screen in real time by OSHSB staff so both in-person and virtual attendees can review the exact text prior to votes.

5: <u>Meeting Atmosphere, Power Dynamics & Stakeholder Inclusion</u>

Beyond technical workflows, participants shared candid feedback on how room culture, public comment pacing, and perceived industry alignment affect grassroots trust and participation:

A. **Public Comment Pacing & Worker Testimony**

Stakeholders noted that rushing public comment or celebrating brief remarks creates an intimidating atmosphere for frontline workers sharing personal safety trauma:

> *"[Chair] Alioto sits at the front of the room and makes a big deal when people giving public comment only spend one sentence or two... He falls over sideways saying, 'Oh my gosh, thank you so much for taking a short time for keeping your comment brief.' That has a really chilling effect on workers who are there to tell their personal story...*

He can say that he wants to hear from workers, but his actions make it clear that he does not want to hear from workers."

— Union Representative

"The board is deciding on standards that impact workers' lives- whether workers go to work and die, get hurt so they can't work again, or are traumatized with PTSD... If you're saying that it's not worth our time collectively for the board to hear from those people about what is truly at stake for the standards that they're voting on, then we are failing on its face."

— Advocate Representative

B. **Perceived Industry Alignment & Room Culture**

Participants across both sessions observed visible, concerning familiarity between leadership and corporate lobbyists, pointing to specific incidents. A union representative recounted observing Board leadership engaging with industry on a break before attempting to move specific industry issues forward, testifying (paraphrased):

I often see leadership spending break time with industry representatives... and then at the end of the meeting attempting to move specific industry issues forward. Look at how the Chair is behaving, because that does not feel like a safe place for workers.

Advocates noted that such visible familiarity creates a chilling effect for labor participants, distorts the appearance of neutral decision-making, and directly compromises public trust in the Board's rulemaking process.

"You see this as soon as you walk in. You see this on break. And it's palpable... There's a certain tone that exists there and that you hear it between, frankly, industry representatives and standard board members, including the chair... It really does feel kind of like a boy's room many times when you walk into a standards board meeting."

— Advocate Representative

Participants emphasized that informal discussions during breaks are a standard part of the administrative process; however, the core concern is one of equality of access. Labor representatives and worker advocates expressed that they are not met with the same informal accessibility, nor do they feel they are afforded equivalent opportunities to build an open, ongoing working relationship with leadership.

Labor representatives also noted double standards in comment enforcement, where worker advocates were publicly reminded not to repeat themselves during second comments while employer lobbyists spoke repeatedly without interruption.

> *"As far as the intimidation aspect of it... I call it the cufflinks count. How many folks are there that have cuff links on? And nice suits, and pick out your lobbyist there. And you're in a position that you're there to ask for something... And so that's already tipped the scales."*
>
> — Union Representative

6: <u>Conclusion: A Foundation for Trust, Equity, and Safety</u>

Ultimately, these roundtable findings serve as a practical roadmap rooted in our strategic pillars: modernizing our digital infrastructure (**Process**), breaking down barriers to civic participation (**The Public**), and supporting our dedicated staff (**The People**).

Elevating worker access and ensuring true transparency are the core of our public trust. Openly sharing these roundtable findings is how we honor our commitment to amplifying underrepresented voices, giving frontline workers a genuine seat at the table.

Modernizing our operations and enhancing agency visibility directly supports our ultimate charge: ensuring that the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board remains an unwavering champion of equity and accountability, fulfilling our foundational mandate to protect the health, safety, and well-being of every working person across California.

7: Actionable Recommendations for Board Reform

1. **Re-Establish Searchable Transcripts**: Restore text meeting transcripts for all regular meetings and post to the OSHSB website.

2. **Restructure Meeting Agendas & Hybrid Access**: Move public comment to the start of agendas for in person and virtual participants.

3. **Adopt Status-Neutral Protocols**: Open meetings with multi-language statements affirming worker protections regardless of legal status.

4. **Institute Third-Party Proxy Testimony**: Allow advocates to submit anonymized evidence for workers facing retaliatory risk.

5. **Enforce Neutral Comment Rules**: Apply time limits and repetition guidelines equally to labor advocates and corporate lobbyists.

6. **Clarify Advisory Committee Best Practice:** Board staff present on policy and guidance around the Advisory Committee process to provide clarity and address the request for "consensus" as a mismatch with (1) the statutory charge of both the Board and DOSH, (2) ensuring equity and public trust; (3) ensuring the integrity of the rulemaking process; and (4) complying with Government Code requirements regarding conflicts of interest for members of state advisory committees.

7. **Implement Live Motion Displays**: For transparency, clarity, and accountability -type all live floor amendments on-screen in real time before Board votes are called.

8. **Deploy Modern Rulemaking Dashboards**: Complete JIRA and Variance Information Management System (VIMS) explore feasibility of integration for searchable, color-coded regulatory tracking.

9. **Enhance Ethical Standards & Guidance Around Stakeholder Interactions**: Adopt a Board Governance Handbook to provide administrative guidance around stakeholder interactions, ensuring decision-making remains objective, prevents the appearance of partisan or industry favoritism, and reinforces public trust in the Board's neutrality.

APPENDIX: POST-ROUNDTABLE SURVEY FINDINGS (N = 15)

Following the October 6th (Sacramento) and 20th (Los Angeles) roundtables, a survey was sent out to all participants. Out of 54 participants, 15 anonymous respondents spanning employer/industry representatives (7), labor organizations/worker advocates (3), government/public agencies (3), safety consultants (1), and public attendees (1)—submitted structured evaluations (28% response rate).

Evaluation Metric	Agree / Strongly Agree (4–5)	Neutral (3)	Disagree / Strongly Disagree (1–2)
Opportunity to Provide Input	93% (14 of 15)	7% (1 of 15)	0% (0 of 15)
Schedule & Timing	100% (15 of 15)	0% (0 of 15)	0% (0 of 15)
Clarity of Objectives	93% (14 of 15)	7% (1 of 15)	0% (0 of 15)
Responsiveness of OSHSB Staff	80% (12 of 15)	13% (2 of 15)	7% (1 of 15)
Relevance of Topics	80% (12 of 15)	13% (2 of 15)	7% (1 of 15)
Balanced Perspectives	87% (13 of 15)	7% (1 of 15)	7% (1 of 15)
Confidence in Future Impact	87% (13 of 15)	7% (1 of 15)	7% (1 of 15)
Venue & Facilities	73% (11 of 15)	27% (4 of 15)	0% (0 of 15)

Key Qualitative Survey Themes:

Accessibility & Hybrid Requests: Multiple respondents urged enabling Zoom participation, providing earlier notice of event dates, and placing open public comment first on Board agendas.

Rulemaking Efficiency & Legacy Standards: Participants requested an administrative mechanism to update outdated or factually inaccurate standards (such as legacy Mine Safety Orders) and deeper insight into Standardized Regulatory Impact Assessments (SRIA).

Commendation for Staff Outreach: Respondents praised agency staff coordination, specifically highlighting how welcoming, accessible, and helpful staff guidance was in navigating Board processes and preparing presentations.