

Capitol Bureau reporter **Hannah Wiley** caught up with Assembly Speaker **Anthony Rendon**, D-Lakewood for a Q and A on this very unusual session. Interview edited for length and clarity.

How is legislating from home going?

RENDON: I'm in Sacramento, have been for almost a month, continuing to come into the Capitol on a daily basis, where my senior management team is. It's also the easiest way, to me, to coordinate all that we have to coordinate, when members have questions about anything from small business closures to unemployment assistance and all the various agencies we're working with. The members are on the ground in their districts getting valuable information. It seems as though this crisis is impacting every district a little differently.

How has the work changed?

RENDON: I come from nonprofit social services. That's where I spent 20 years of my life and it feels to an extent to be back in that world. A lot of what we are doing is connecting people to services, to programs, and to government agencies that can help them or nonprofits that can help them.

Is policy on hold right now? I'm thinking of the calls for a strong production package, homelessness.

RENDON: The priorities are different. This isn't just a crisis. This is a crisis that is and will be multifaceted. It's going to impact all aspects of the state, all aspects of the economy, all levels of education, so we have to make sure that the virus and our response addresses all aspects of what we do. At the same time, we had a homeless crisis before COVID, we had climate change before COVID. We need to address education as a state, health care as a state. We are going to make sure we address COVID but at the same time, we started the year with certain efforts and we're going to continue to do so.

Does this present an opportunity for the Legislature to consider new ways to legislate, remote work policies, alternative voting mechanisms, etc.?

RENDON: In terms of remote work, yeah we are. I'm in the Capitol but there are less than a dozen people in the Capitol and generally there are 1,000 people in the Capitol. the vast majority of staff is working remotely, and that goes for the district offices as well. For remote voting, yeah, we've looked at it. We know there are a number of constitutional concerns, we know that you have to establish a quorum in person in Sacramento, so that's certainly a challenge we have to face.

We also know an LA city council meeting was hacked on Zoom recently. The job is still a job that takes place in Sacramento. The nature of the work will largely remain the same.

You said during your March 16 floor speech that democracy must continue. How has that been a struggle?

RENDON: Our system of representative democracy has been helped by having members return to their districts, serving their constituents, having their member on the ground. From that standpoint, democracy has continued and flourished. At the same time, yeah we have serious work to do in Sacramento.

Is this among the most memorable moments you've experienced in the Capitol?

RENDON: It's part of the tapestry. We had worked on homelessness, climate change, obviously the #MeToo movement was moment in time that we were challenged as well. It's part of the whole overall picture that has been an interesting four years so far.

Have any of the members tested positive for COVID-19?

RENDON: No, not that I'm aware.

What about staff?

RENDON: Only speaking for the Assembly? No.

So the January budget is “no longer operable,” Newsom said.

RENDON: We're going to need to adjust our budget. We'll have more specific details in the future, but members are certainly being asked to be realistic in terms of their budget requests.

What about committee hearings, floor sessions, deadlines, etc?

RENDON: We really don't know. It will be condensed to some degree, but it's hard to tell.