Brown signs historic vaccine bill

By Tracy Seipel and Jessica Calefati, Contra Costa Times

SACRAMENTO – In a historic decision that could reverberate nationwide, Gov. Jerry Brown on Tuesday signed a bill mandating that almost all California schoolchildren be fully vaccinated, regardless of their parents' personal or religious beliefs.

By signing Senate Bill 277 into law, Brown pushed the Golden State – long a bastion of liberal vaccine exemptions – into an odd political alliance with two conservative states, Mississippi and West Virginia. Until Tuesday, they were the only states that permitted medical exemptions as the sole legitimate reasons to sidestep vaccinations.

"The science is clear that vaccines dramatically protect children against a number of infectious and dangerous diseases," Brown wrote in his signing message. "While it's true that no medical intervention is without risk, the evidence shows that immunization powerfully benefits and protects the community."

But the governor also noted that the Legislature had specifically amended SB277 to exempt children from immunizations whenever their physicians conclude that there are "circumstances, including but not limited to, family medical history, for which the physician does not recommend immunization."

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