Facing 13 Strikes: The Research

John Vasconcellos "Dean's Reflection #7" **September 2003**

1. THE RECESSIONARY ECONOMY

While there are some signs of strength in the California economy, the recovery has not translated into jobs for Californians:

- unemployment above 6 percent since Oct. 2001
- job growth rate plummeted in '02, remains below zero

34 percent of PPIC survey respondents listed the economy/jobs as the "most important problem facing California" and 53 percent believe the next 12 months will bring bad times financially.

2. THE BANKRUPT STATE BUDGET

In 2003, our annual deficit reached more than 1/3rd of our total budget. We are already $8 billion in the hole on our '04-'05 budget.

Unlike prior generations who spent heavily on schools and infrastructure, we are not investing in our future. Increase in per capita general fund expenditures from 1959-2000:

Decade	Average Annual Increase
1959/60-1969/70	8.8%
1969/70-1979/80	6.8%
1979/80-1989/90	essentially flat
1990-2000	1.0%

3. OUR 2/3RDS BUDGET & TAX VOTE REQUIREMENT

California is one of only three states to require a 2/3rds vote for passage of the budget.

In the last 20 years, only six budgets were signed on time.

4. THE CORRUPTING INFLUENCE OF SPECIAL INTEREST CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

In one study of voting in the California legislature, the probability that a legislator would vote *for* a bill deemed "critical" by the bill's *opponents* was 60 percent if the legislator received *no* financial contribution from the opponents. The same study found a 36 percent chance a legislator would vote *for* a critical bill if contributions from the bill's opponents were greater than $10,000.

California's top donors to state party committees, by sector and party, 1999-2000:

Sector	Total	Democrats	Republicans
finance, insur. & real estate	$2,934,030	$237,075	$2,696,955
ideological/single-issue	$2,907,277	$2,218,340	$688,937
communications/electronics	$1,434,525	$227,850	$1,206,675
labor	$1,345,398	$1,320,256	$25,142
misc. business	$1,197,640	$407,244	$790,396
other	$628,974	$21,254	$607,720
lawyers & lobbyists	$406,737	$183,403	$223,334
transportation	$371,860	$15,500	$356,360
agribusiness	$277,327	$32,500	$244,827
energy & natural resources	$266,435	$120,500	$145,935
construction	$262,374	$41,150	$221,224
health	$206,800	$90,445	$116,355

Candidates in the last gubernatorial campaign spent over $109m.

California is the top state for lobbyist expenditures – totaling $197m in 2002, up from $188m in 2001. By comparison in the next highest ranked state, New York, lobbyist expenditures were $92m and $80m for the same years, respectively.

4. THE CORRUPTING INFLUENCE OF SPECIAL INTEREST CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS (CONT)

A competitive legislative race can cost over $1 million and some legislative races actually exceed what it costs to run statewide.

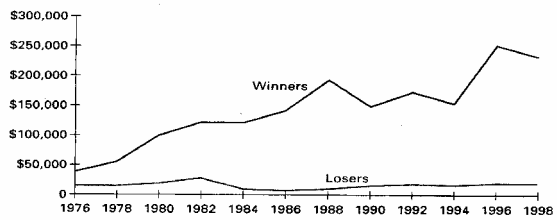


Figure 4.2 State Assembly Campaigns: Average (Median) Expenditures by winners versus losers, 1976-1998 General Elections.

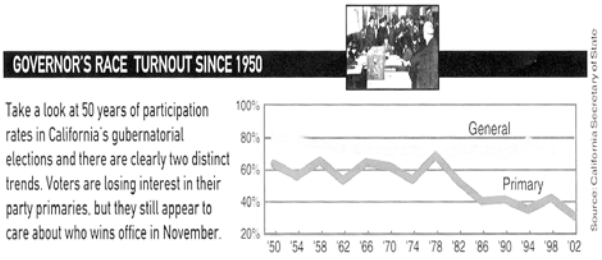
5. PROLONGED, HOLLOW & NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNS

Excluding special elections, turnout in the 2002 general election was the lowest in nearly 100 years (36 percent). Of 21 million eligible voters, less than eight million showed up at the polls on Election Day.

Voter Turnout in the 2002 Primary Campaign, Largest Counties:

County	Turnout
Los Angeles	25%
San Diego	33%
Orange	37%
Santa Clara	30%
Alameda	34%
San Bernardino	29%
Riverside	27%
Sacramento	38%
Contra Costa	39%

Signaling dissatisfaction with the politics of the two major parties, the third-party vote in the 2002 general election was the highest since 1934 (over 5 percent).



Independents and persons with little interest in politics are more affected by it {negative campaigning}: useful "negative" criticism in a campaign makes them more likely to vote… but unsubstantiated and unjustified attacks makes them "more likely to stay at home" in disgust.

Television advertising accounts for approximately 80 percent of spending in statewide races.

Nearly six in 10 Californians (58 percent) and nearly eight in 10 likely voters (68 percent) disapprove of the way the state legislature is handling its job.

6. LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS THAT ARE TOO LARGE

The 1879 state constitution set a permanent limit of 40 Senators and 80 Assemblymen.

In 1883, California's population was 1.2 million and average district size was 21,480(S) and 10,631(A).

In 1960, California's population was 16 million and average district size was 392,000(S) and 165,500(A).

In 2003, with a population of approximately 35 million, average district size is 847,000(S) and 423,000(A).

7. TERM LIMITS THAT ARE TOO SHORT

Of the remaining 16 states with term limits, only Oklahoma and Arkansas have limits more restrictive than California.

Utah and Idaho recently repealed their term limits laws.

One survey of lobbyists in five states -- including California -- found:

- two percent of California lobbyist respondents reported that post-term limits legislators are more knowledgeable about statewide issues overall, and 86 percent believe term limited legislators are less knowledgeable about issues in committee;
- 63 percent of California respondents agreed that, compared to pre-term limit days, legislators now devote less attention to statewide issues;
- 70 percent of California lobbyists reported increases in the number of campaign solicitations they receive now (post term limits);
- a majority of respondents in all surveyed states reported that since term limits, power to influence public policy has increased for the bureaucracy, legislative staff and for the Governor.

8. REAPPORTIONMENT THAT IS TOO PARTISAN

The 1991 court-ordered apportionment yielded 44 competitive seats in the Assembly, Senate and Congress.

The 2000 apportionment, completed by the Legislature, yielded only 17 competitive seats in the Assembly, Senate and Congress.

In Congress, 50 of 52 California incumbents were protected by the 2000 re-map.

In 2002, 95.4 percent of primary winners breezed through the general election.

9. A GOVERNOR WHO HASN'T SHOWN MANY SIGNS OF COLLABORATION

"People expect government to reflect the vision that I suggested. Nobody else in the Legislature ran statewide. Their job is to implement my vision. That is their job." – *Gov. Gray Davis, 1999*

10. REPUBLICANS WHO SHOW SCANT SIGNS OF 'COMPASSION' TO MATCH THEIR 'CONSERVATISM'

In the 2002 session, no Assembly Republican received over a 50 percent voting rating by the Congress of California Seniors (CCS). Nineteen of 30 received a grade of 35 percent or less. Republicans in the Senate received a rating of 24 percent or less. CCS tracks bills with health and social welfare implications for the poor.

11. DEMOCRATS WHO SHOW SCANT SIGNS OF WILLINGNESS TO SAY "NO" TO DEMANDS

Twenty of 26 Senate Democrats voted with the AFL-CIO on over 90 percent of the bills tracked by the union in 2002. In the Assembly, 42 of 50 Democrats received a grade of 90 percent or higher on the same bills. The AFL-CIO tracks a broad range of bills with both general and specific impact on workers.

12. A CITZENRY WHO IS SYSTEMATICALLY MISINFORMED BY A PRESS THAT NO LONGER KNOWS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JOURNALISM, COMMERCE AND ENTERTAINMENT

In 1996-97, the national average for the amount of coverage given to politics and government by television news stations was 15.3 percent. In Los Angeles, it was 4.5 percent.

Less than half of 1 percent of the total amount of news time was devoted to the California gubernatorial campaign in the 1998 cycle. Of that minuscule amount of coverage more than half of it was devoted to discussions of campaign strategy, tactics, polls, candidate attacks or fund-raising activity, leaving voters with virtually no coverage of the main issues of the day. On a statewide basis the stations produced slightly more than one minute of news coverage each per day in the last 30 days of the campaign.

13. THROUGHOUT, A PROFOUND AND PERVASIVE LACK OF TRUST – IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS, THE ECONOMIC ELITES AND OUR FELLOW RESIDENTS

Coincident with the deepening state budget crises, trust in state government "to do what is right" is at its lowest level since the PPIC Statewide Survey began in 1998. Today, only 34 percent of all adults, and 31 percent of likely voters, say that they trust the government in Sacramento to do what is right just about always or most of the time. In 2001 and early 2002, nearly half of Californians thought that the state government could be trusted to do what is right almost all of the time or most of the time.