

CHAPTER 1

CALIFORNIA'S PEOPLE, ECONOMY, AND POLITICS: YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

Like so much else about California, our state's politics appears to change constantly, unpredictably, and even inexplicably. Politicians seem to rise and fall more because of their personalities and campaign treasuries than because of their policies or political party ties. The governor and the legislature appear to be competing with one another rather than solving our problems. Multibillion-dollar campaigns ask voters to make decisions about issues that seem to emerge from nowhere only to see many overturned by the courts. Some Californians are confused or disillusioned by all of this and disdain politics and political participation.

But however unpredictable or even disgusting California politics may appear, it is serious business that affects us all. And despite its volatility, California can be understood by examining its history and its present characteristics, especially its changing population and economy. Wave after wave of immigrants has made California a diverse, multicultural society, while new technologies have repeatedly transformed the state's economy. The resulting disparate ethnic and economic interests compete for the benefits and protections conferred by government thus shape the state's politics. But to understand California today-and tomorrow-we need to know a little about its past and about the development of these competing interests.

COLONIZATION, REBELLION, AND STATEHOOD

The first Californians were probably immigrants like the rest of us. Archaeologists believe that the ancestors of American Indians crossed

over the Bering Strait from Asia thousands of years ago and then headed south. By 1769, about three hundred thousand Native Americans were living mostly near the coast of what is now California, while the Spaniards were colonizing the area with missions and military outposts.

These native Californians were brought to the missions as Catholic converts and workers, but European diseases and the destruction of their culture reduced their numbers to about one hundred thousand by 1849. Disease and massacres wiped out whole tribes and the Indian population continued to diminish through the nineteenth century. Today less than 1 percent of California's population is Native American. Many feel deeply alienated from a society that has overwhelmed their peoples and cultures, and some strive mightily to preserve their traditions.

Apart from building missions, the Spaniards did little to develop their faraway possession, and little changed when Mexico, which included California within its boundaries, declared its independence from Spain in 1822. A few thousand Mexicans quietly raised cattle on vast ranches.

Meanwhile, expansionist interests in the United States cast covetous eyes on California's rich lands and access to the Pacific. When Mexico and the United States went to war over Texas in 1846, recent Yankee immigrants to California seized the moment and declared independence from Mexico. After the U.S. victory in Texas, Mexico surrendered its claim to possessions extending from Texas to California.

At about the same time, gold was discovered in California. The gold rush that followed increased the area's foreign population from 9,000 in 1846 to 264,000 in 1852. Many immigrants came directly from Europe. The first Chinese also arrived to work in the mines that yielded more than a billion dollars' worth of gold in five years.

The surge in population and commerce moved the new Californians to political action. By 1849 they had drafted a constitution, mostly copied from those of existing states, and requested statehood, which the U.S. Congress was only too glad to grant. The organization of the new state was remarkably similar to what we have today. The forty-eight delegates to the constitutional convention (only seven of whom were native-born Californians) set up a two-house legislature, a supreme court, and an executive branch consisting of a governor, a lieutenant governor, a controller, an attorney general, and a superintendent of public instruction. A bill of rights was also included in the constitution, but only white males were allowed to vote. The rights of women and racial minorities were ignored and, in addition to being denied the right to vote, California's Chinese, African American, and Native American residents were soon prohibited by law from owning land, testifying in court, or attending public schools.

As the gold rush ended, a land rush began. Unlike the land in other states, where small homesteads predominated, much of California's land had been concentrated in huge parcels created by Spanish and Mexican

land grants, As early as 1870 a few hundred men owned most of the farmland. Their ranches were the forerunners of contemporary agribusiness corporations and, as the mainstay of the state's economy, they exercised even more clout than their modern successors.

In less than fifty years California had belonged to three different nations. During the same period, its economy had changed dramatically as hundreds of thousands of immigrants from all over the world came to claim their share of the "Golden State." The pattern of a rapidly evolving, multicultural polity had been set.

RAILROADS, MACHINES, AND REFORM

Technology wrought the next transformation in the form of railroads. In 1861 Sacramento merchants Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, Collis Huntington, and Leland Stanford founded the railroad that would become the Southern Pacific. Then they persuaded Congress to provide millions of dollars in land grants and loan subsidies for a railroad to link California with the eastern United States, thus greatly expanding the market for California products. Leland Stanford, then governor, used his influence to provide state assistance. Cities and counties also contributed, under threat of being bypassed by the railroad. To obtain workers at cheap rates, the railroad builders imported fifteen thousand Chinese laborers.

When the transcontinental track was completed in 1869, the Southern Pacific expanded its system throughout the state by building new lines and buying up others. The railroad crushed competitors by cutting its shipping charges, and by the 1880s it had become the state's dominant transportation company as well as its largest private landowner, with 11 percent of the entire state.

With its business agents doubling as political representatives in almost every California city and county, the Southern Pacific soon developed a formidable political machine. "The Octopus," as novelist Frank Norris called the railroad, worked through both the Republican and Democratic political parties to place allies in state and local offices. Once there, they were obliged to protect the interests of the Southern Pacific if they wanted to continue in office. County tax assessors supported by the machine set favorable tax rates for the railroad while the machine-controlled legislature ensured a hands-off policy by state government.

THE WORKINGMEN'S PARTY

People in small towns and rural areas who were unwilling to support the machine lost jobs, business, and other benefits. Some moved to cities

(especially San Francisco, where manufacturing jobs were increasingly available). Many of the Chinese workers who were brought to California to build the railroad also sought work in the cities when it was completed. Earlier immigrants greeted them with hostility, however, when a depression made jobs scarce in the 1870s. Led by Denis Kearney, Irish immigrants became the core of the Workingmen's party, a political organization that blamed the railroad and the Chinese for their economic difficulties.

Small farmers opposed to the railroad allied through the Grange movement. In 1879, the Grangers and the Workingmen's party called California's second constitutional convention in hopes of breaking the power of the railroad. The new constitution they created mandated regulation of railroads, utilities, banks, and other corporations. An elected state Board of Equalization was set up to ensure the fairness of local tax assessments on railroads and their friends as well as their enemies. The new constitution also prohibited the Chinese from owning land, voting, and working for state or local government.

The railroad soon reclaimed power, however, gaining control of the agencies created to regulate it and, spurred on by the discovery of oil in the Los Angeles area, pushing growth in southern California. Nonetheless, the efforts made during this period to regulate big business and control racial tensions became recurring themes in California life and politics.

THE PROGRESSIVES

The growth fostered by the railroad eventually produced a new middle class. The economy grew more urban and more diverse, encompassing merchants, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and skilled workers, who were not dependent on the railroad. Nor were they tolerant of the corrupt practices and favoritism of the machine, which many felt was holding back the economic development of their communities. Instead, the new middle class demanded honesty and competence, which they called "good government." In 1907 a number of these crusaders established the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, a reform group within the Republican party, and became part of the national Progressive movement. They elected their leader, Hiram Johnson, to the governorship in 1910, and they also captured control of the state legislature.

To break the power of the machine, the Progressives introduced reforms that have shaped California politics to this day. Predictably, they created a new regulatory agency for the railroads and utilities, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC); most of their reforms, however, were aimed at weakening the political parties as tools of bosses and machines. Instead of party bosses handpicking candidates at party conventions, the voters were given the power to select their party's nominees for office in

primary elections. Cross-filing further diluted party power by allowing candidates to file for and win the nominations of more than one political party. The Progressives made city and county elections nonpartisan by removing party labels from the ballot altogether. They also created a civil service system to select state employees on the basis of their qualifications rather than their political connections.

Finally, the Progressives introduced a system of direct democracy, which allowed the voters to amend the constitution and make law through initiatives and referenda and to recall, or remove, elected officials before their terms expired. Supporters of an initiative, referendum, or recall must circulate petitions and collect a specified number of signatures of registered voters before it becomes a ballot measure or proposition.

Like the Workingmen's party before them, most Progressives were concerned about immigration. Antagonism toward recently arrived Japanese immigrants (seventy-two thousand by 1910) led the Progressives to ban land ownership by aliens and to enact the National Immigration Act of 1924, which effectively halted Japanese immigration. Other changes under the Progressives included the right to vote for women, child labor and workers' compensation laws, and conservation programs to protect natural resources.

The railroad's political machine eventually died, although California's increasingly diverse economy probably had as much to do with its demise as the Progressive reforms did. The emergent oil, automobile, and trucking industries gave the state important alternative means of transportation and shipping. The reform movement waned in the 1920s, but the Progressive legacy of weak political parties and direct democracy opened up California's politics to its citizens, as well as to individual candidates with strong personalities and powerful interest groups.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II

California's population grew by more than two million in the 1920s (see Table 1.1). Most of the newcomers headed for Los Angeles, where employment opportunities in shipping, filmmaking, and manufacturing (clothing, automobiles, and aircraft) abounded. Growth continued at a slower pace during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and brought thousands of poor white immigrants from the nation's Dust Bowl. Many wandered through California's great Central Valley in search of work. They soon displaced Mexicans, who earlier had supplanted the Chinese and Japanese, as the state's farm workers. Racial antagonism ran high, and many Mexicans were arbitrarily sent back to Mexico. Labor unrest

TABLE 1.1
CALIFORNIA'S POPULATION GROWTH,
SELECTED DECADES, 1850-2000

YEAR	POPULATION	PERCENT OF U.S. POPULATION
1850	93,000	0.4
1900	1,485,000	2.0
1950	10,643,000	7.0
1960	15,863,000	8.8
1970	20,039,000	9.8
1980	23,780,000	10.5
1990	29,733,000	11.7
2000	34,653,395	12.6

SOURCE: U.S. Census and RAND (ca.rand.org)

reached a crescendo in the early thirties, as workers on farms, in canneries and on the docks of San Francisco and Los Angeles fought for higher wages and an eight-hour workday.

The immigrants and union activists of the 1920s and 1930s also changed California politics. Many registered as Democrats, thus challenging the dominant Republicans. The Depression and President Franklin Roosevelt's popular New Deal helped the Democrats become California's majority party in registration, although winning elections proved more difficult for them. Their biggest boost came from Upton Sinclair, a novelist, a socialist, and the Democratic candidate for governor in 1934. His End Poverty in California (EPIC) movement almost led to an election victory, but the state's conservative establishment spent an unprecedented \$10million attacking and ultimately defeating him. The Democrats finally gained the governorship in 1938, but their candidate, Culbert Olson, was the only Democratic winner between 1894 and 1958.

World War II revived the economic boom; California's radio, electronics, and aircraft industries grew at phenomenal rates. The jobs brought new immigrants, including many African Americans. Although their proportion of the state's population doubled during the 1940s, African Americans were on the periphery of racial conflict. Meanwhile, suspected of loyalty to their ancestral homeland, 111,000 Japanese Americans were sent to prison camps during the war. Mexican Americans, too, were victimized when Anglo sailors and police attacked them in the "Zoot Suit Riots" in Los Angeles in 1943.

While the cities boomed, the Central Valley bloomed, thanks to water projects initiated by the state and federal governments during the 1930s. Dams and canals brought water to the desert and reaffirmed agriculture as a mainstay of the California economy. The defense industries that had

supplemented California's industrial base during the war also became permanent fixtures, with aerospace and electronics adding to their momentum.

Although the voters had chosen a Democratic governor during the Depression, they returned to the Republican fold as the economy revived. Earl Warren, who symbolized a new breed of Republican, was elected governor in 1942, 1946, and 1950, becoming the only individual ever to win the office three times. Warren used cross-filing to win the nominations of both parties and staked out a relationship with the voters that he claimed was above party politics. A classic example of California's personality-oriented politics, Warren left the state in 1955 to become chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

POSTWAR POLITICS

In 1958, with the Republican party in disarray because of infighting, Californians elected a Democratic governor, Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, and a Democratic majority in the state legislature. To prevent Republicans from taking advantage of cross-filing again, the state's new leaders immediately outlawed that electoral device.

In control of both the governor's office and the legislature for the first time in the twentieth century, Democrats moved aggressively to develop the state's infrastructure. Completion of the massive California Water Project, construction of the state highway network, and organization of the higher education system were among the advances made to accommodate a growing population. But all these programs cost money, and after opening their purse strings during the eight-year tenure of Pat Brown, Californians became more cautious about the state's direction. Race riots in Los Angeles and student unrest in Berkeley and elsewhere also turned the voters against liberal Democrats such as Brown.

In 1966 Republican Ronald Reagan was elected governor. Reagan revived the California Republican party and moved the state in a more conservative direction before going on to serve as president. His successor as governor, Democrat Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown Jr., was the son of the earlier Governor Brown and a liberal on social issues. But like Reagan, the younger Brown led California away from spending on growth-inducing infrastructure, such as highways and schools. In 1978 the voters solidified this change with the watershed tax-cutting initiative, Proposition 13 (see Chapter 8). Brown was followed by Republicans George Deukmejian in 1982 and Pete Wilson in 1990, each serving two terms in office. Wilson was initially seen as a moderate, but he moved to the right on welfare, illegal immigration, crime, and affirmative action to win reelection in 1994 and, in the process, alienated many minority

voters from the Republican party. In 1998, California elected Gray Davis, its first Democratic governor in sixteen years.

California voters opted for Republicans in all but one presidential contest between 1948 and 1988, then supported Democrats Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 and Al Gore in 2000. Democrats have had more consistent success in the state legislature and the congressional delegation, where they have been the dominant party since 1960. The voters have also been increasingly involved in policymaking by initiative and referendum (see Chapter 2). Amendments to California's constitution, which require voter approval, appear on almost every state ballot. California's 1879 constitution has been amended nearly five hundred times; the U.S. Constitution includes just twenty-seven amendments.

Throughout these changes, the state continued to grow, outpacing most other states so much that the California delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives now numbers fifty-two more than twenty-one other states combined. Much of this growth was the result of a new wave of immigration facilitated by changes in national immigration laws during the 1960s and 1970s. The racially discriminatory quotas introduced by the Progressives in 1924 were eliminated, and immigration from Asia increased greatly, especially from southeast Asia after the Vietnam War. A national amnesty for illegal residents also enabled many Mexicans to gain citizenship and bring their families from Mexico. In all, 85 percent of the six million newcomers and births in California in the 1980s were Asian, Latino, or black.¹ In the 1990s some Californians began leaving the state, but its population continued to increase as a result of births and immigration from abroad.

California's constantly increasing diversity enlivened the state's culture and provided a steady flow of new workers, but it also increased tensions. Some affluent Californians retreated to gated communities; others fled the state. Racial conflict broke out between gangs and in schools and prisons. As in difficult economic times throughout California's history, a recession and recurring state budget deficits in the early 1990s led many Californians, including Governor Wilson, to blame immigrants, especially those who were in California illegally. A series of ballot measures raised divisive, race-related issues like illegal immigration, bilingualism and affirmative action. The prosperity of the late 1990s and new state leadership somewhat muted these issues, however.

CALIFORNIA TODAY

If California were an independent nation, its economy would rank seventh in the world, with an annual gross national product of over a trillion

dollars. Much of the state's strength stems from its economic diversity (see Table 1.2). The elements of this diversity constitute powerful political interests in state politics.

Half of California-mostly desert and mountains-is owned by the state and federal governments, but a few big farm corporations control the state's rich farmlands. Southern Pacific, for example, remains California's largest private landowner, holding 2.4 million acres (about 2.4 percent of the state), including nearly one-sixth of the Central Valley. These enormous corporate farms, known as agri-businesses, make California the nation's leading farm state, producing over two hundred crops providing 45 percent of the fruits and vegetables and 25 percent of the table food consumed nationally. Fresno County alone produces more farm products than do twenty-four states.

State politics affects this huge economic force in many ways, but most notably in labor relations, environmental regulation, and water supply. Farmers and their employees have battled since the turn of the century over issues ranging from wages to safety. Under the leadership of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers union, laborers organized and, supported by public boycotts of certain farm products, achieved the establishment of the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) in 1975 to resolve disputes between farm owners and workers. The ALRB helped somewhat, and the union won victories for workers on some farms, but the struggle continues today. California's agricultural industry is also caught up in environmental issues, including the use of harmful pesticides, pollution of

TABLE 1.2
CALIFORNIA'S ECONOMY

INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	EMPLOYEES	AMOUNT (IN BILLIONS)
Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries	415,000	\$ 21.633 B
Mining	29,000	6.561
Construction	741,400	54.885
Manufacturing	1,992,900	146.192
Transportation, communications, and utilities	750,800	72.501
Wholesale	855,900	71.177
Retail	2,452,600	91.500
Finance, insurance, and real estate	834,800	257.282
Services	4,576,100	256.925
Government (includes schools)	2,515,500	114.962
Total, all sectors	14,869,800	1,055.016

SOURCE: California Statistical Abstract, 1999 and U,S, Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Survey of Current Business, June 1999

water supplies, and the urbanization of farmland as booming growth in the Central Valley absorbs farmland and brings urban problems such as traffic to rural areas, But the biggest issue is always water, Most of California's cities and farmlands are arid and must import water from other parts of the state, Thanks to government subsidies, farmers claim 79 percent of the state's water supply at prices so low that they have little reason to improve inefficient irrigation systems, Meanwhile, urban dwellers are asked to ration water during droughts and the growth of urban areas is limited by their water supplies, Whether the issue is water, the environment, or labor relations, agriculture is in the thick of California politics, as the state strives to protect an essential and powerful industry as well as the interests of its citizens.

Agriculture is big business, but many more Californians work in manufacturing, especially in the aerospace, defense, and high-tech industries, Even more people are employed in postindustrial occupations such as retail sales, finance, tourism, and services, Government policies on growth, the environment, and taxation affect them, too, and all suffer when anyone goes into a slump.

The defense industry did just that in the early 1990s when the federal government reduced military spending, In 1998, with 12 percent of the national population, California received 16 percent of the U.S, defense contracts, But expensive military programs and military bases became unnecessary when the communism collapsed in the Soviet Union and the Cold War ended, Suddenly the state had to absorb 17 percent of the defense reductions, Retrenchment cost 175,000 defense-related jobs between 1988 and 1995, amounting to 55 percent of the entire industry sector,² This negative "peace dividend" coincided with a national recession that encouraged other manufacturers to flee California for states with lower taxes and wages, Altogether, over eight hundred thousand jobs were lost during the recession of the 1990s.³

Yet even as employment in some industries declined, it thrived in others, especially telecommunications, entertainment, medical equipment, international trade, and above all, high tech, Spawned by the defense and aerospace companies that fell into decline in the early 1990s, high tech is widely acknowledged to have been the key to the economic revival of California and the nation at the end of the decade, These highly creative, research-oriented industries focus on computers, electronics, and information management and delivery systems, Today California hosts a quarter of the nation's high-tech firms providing nearly a million jobs.

Half of the nation's computer engineers work in what has been dubbed "Silicon Valley," after the silicon chip that revolutionized the computer industry, Running between San Jose and San Francisco, Silicon Valley hosts thousands of high tech firms including industry leaders such as Hewlett-Packard (technical instruments), Intel (computer chips), Cisco

Systems (networking equipment), Sun Microsystems (workstations), and Yahoo! (Internet). These firms have been joined by biomedical and pharmaceutical companies, all contributing to California's high-tech transformation. So productive is the area that in 1996 it surpassed New York as the largest exporting region in the United States.

But Silicon Valley's advantage in high-tech industries has waned slightly in recent years. High housing costs, inadequate supplies of water, traffic congestion, and state and local government environmental requirements have led some companies to transfer production facilities to other states or out of the country altogether. Even with growth slowing, Silicon Valley generated 21,200 jobs in 1999 alone. This demand for workers, combined with the problems of housing, traffic and government regulation, has pushed the high-tech industry into politics. Companies have formed advocacy groups, and individual entrepreneurs have spoken out on issues ranging from housing and transportation to producing an educated work force and increasing the immigration quotas for high-tech workers from abroad. Another manifestation of the problems of Silicon Valley is the emergence of nearly twenty thousand high-tech companies in southern California, from Santa Barbara ("Silicon Beach") to the San Fernando Valley ("Tech Corridor") to biotechnology-oriented San Diego. The greater Sacramento area in the Central Valley has also become home to high-tech manufacturing.

Computer technology also spurred rapid expansion of the entertainment industry, long a key component of California's economy. This particularly benefited the Los Angeles area, which was hit hard by cuts in defense spending, but San Francisco has also developed as a multimedia center. Entertainment and tourism together provided 532,100 jobs in 1998. Half of these were in the film industry, but tourism remains a bastion of the economy, with California regularly ranking first among the states in visitors. Along with agriculture, high tech, telecommunications and other industries, these businesses have given our state a vital economy and made it a leader in international as well as domestic trade. California's exports totaled \$107 billion in 1999-over 10 percent of the state's total business activity; 60 percent of this trade was technology related.⁴ The state's recovery from the recession of the early 1990s was due largely to these industries and to the diversity of its economy and its people and their ability to adapt to change. Most other states lack these advantages; some are dependent on a single industry or product.

California's adaptability may derive from a population even more varied than its economy. The succession of immigrant groups has brought workers eager to take jobs in the state's new and old industries. Currently, 25 percent of California's population is foreign born. The extent of California's ethnic diversity, both now and in the future, is indicated in Table 1.3. As of the year 2000, non-Latino whites no longer constitute the

TABLE 1.3
CALIFORNIA'S RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY:
PAST, PRESENT, AND PROJECTED

	1990		2000		2010	
	TOTAL AGE 0-14		TOTAL AGE 0-14		TOTAL AGE 0-14	
Non-Latino White	57.1%	46.1%	49.9	36.6	44.8	29.7
Latino	26.0	32.9	31.6	43.6	34.9	49.2
Asian	9.2	10.8	11.4	12.4	13.3	14.6
Black	7.1	9.1	6.7	6.9	6.4	6.1
Native American	0.6	1.1	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.4

SOURCE: California Department of Finance and RAND (ca.rand.org), California Population by Race/Ethnicity and Age Percentage totals may exceed 100 due to rounding.

majority. Also of note is the shifting ethnic balance among children under 14 years of age. Asian and Latino numbers have grown rapidly since the 1970s, while the black and white proportions of California's population have fallen. This shift is slowly producing a shift in political power as well.

The realization of the California dream is not shared equally among these groups. In 1999 the income of 14.6 percent of Californians fell below the federal poverty level (compared to 11.8 percent nationwide). Despite California's resurgent economy, a recent study revealed that the gap between rich and poor is among the worst in the U.S. and is still growing.⁵ Poverty is also unequally distributed among ethnic groups. Latinos, blacks, and southeast Asians tend to occupy the bottom of the class structure with low-paying service jobs; other Asians, along with Anglos, predominate in the more comfortable professional classes. The economic disparities are profound. Whereas the median income in 1998 was \$27,000 for whites, \$24,000 for Asians, and \$23,000 for blacks, the median for Latinos was \$14,560.

The biggest economic problem for minorities, recent arrivals, and many other Californians today is the cost of housing. With a median price of \$255,580 in 2000, California houses cost nearly double the national average; only 29 percent of the state's families earned enough to purchase the median-priced house.⁶ As a result, home ownership in California lags well behind the national average, and more Californians are driven into the rental market-where prices also exceed the national average.

Geographic divisions complicate California's economic and ethnic diversity. The most pronounced of these lies between north and south. The San Francisco Bay area tends to be liberal and Democratic, with

high concentrations of European and Asian ethnic groups. "The City" of San Francisco is a major financial center, whereas its more populous neighbor, San Jose, hosts the high-tech industries of Silicon Valley. Southern California originally drew mainly mid-western immigrants, but today ethnic minorities outnumber Anglos in both the city and the county of Los Angeles. Though Los Angeles tends to vote Democratic, most of the rest of southern California is staunchly Republican.

Rapid growth in other parts of California now challenges the predominance of the two great metropolitan areas. The state's vast Central Valley has led the way, with cities from Sacramento to Fresno and Bakersfield gobbling up farmland. California's northern coast, Sierra Nevada, and southern desert regions also have distinct identities. Water, agriculture, and the environment are major issues in these sparsely populated but growing areas. Except for the Sacramento area, the Central Valley and these other regions of California are more conservative than their metropolitan counterparts. Voters in non-coastal areas will soon outnumber those in either the San Francisco or Los Angeles areas, and their impact on state politics increased greatly in the 1990s.

So varied are California's regions that proposals to divide the state, usually along north-south lines, date back to 1859. In 1992 a plan to form anew state from twenty-seven counties north of San Francisco and Sacramento won wide approval in the sparsely populated northern counties but has been forgotten for the moment.

INTO THE FUTURE

All these factors add up to California politics today. No wonder it seems complicated! From a history full of conflicting interests and turbulent change, California has forged unique political institutions, including weak parties and an electorate that makes policy via direct democracy. All the elements of today's economic, demographic and geographic diversity vie with one another for political influence within the framework they have inherited, sometimes trying to change it. Just as the economic and demographic changes of the past have shaped contemporary California, so today's changes are shaping the future.

Notes

1. U.S. Census.
2. "The 'Silver' Age of State's Defense-Aerospace Economy," Los Angeles Times, July 7, 1996, pp. M1, M6.

3. New York Times, March 29, 1995.
4. California Trade and Commerce Agency.
5. "Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends," Center on Budget Policy Priorities, Washington, D.C., www.cbpp.org, January 2000.
6. California Association of Realtors.

Learn More on the World Wide Web

Demographic data'

RAND: www.ca.rand.org

California Department of Finance: www.dof.ca.gov

Learn More at the Library

Mark Baldassare, *California in the New Millennium*, UC Press, 2000.
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Century California.

Kevin Starr, *California Dream Series*, Oxford University Press. A
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Working Partnerships USA and Economic Policy Institute, *Walking
the Lifelong Tightrope: Negotiating Work in the New Economy*, San
Jose: Working Partnerships USA, 1999. www.atwork.org