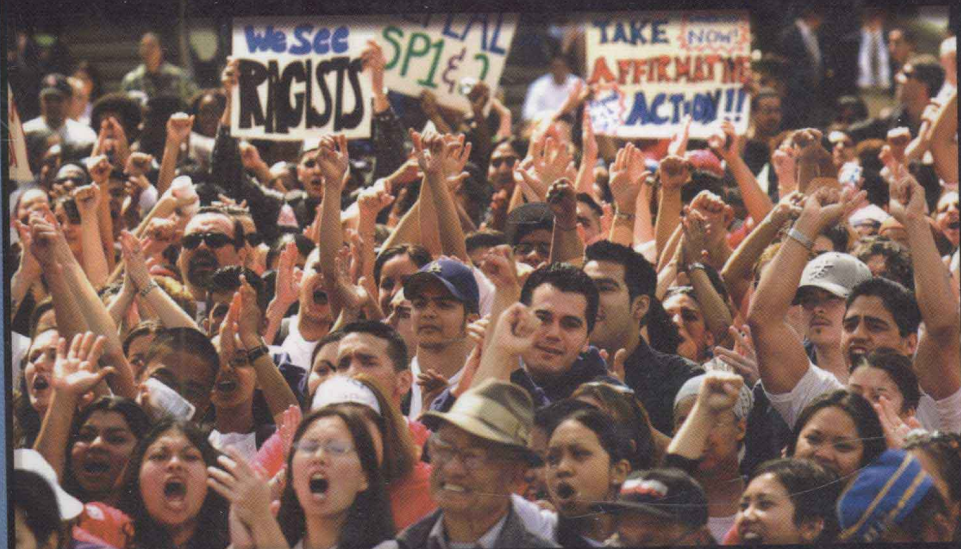


# CALIFORNIA

## POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

A PRACTICAL APPROACH



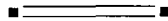
SEVENTH EDITION

LARRY N. GERSTON    TERRY CHRISTENSEN

# CALIFORNIA POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

## A Practical Approach

*Seventh Edition*



**Larry N. Gerston**

*San Jose State University*

**Terry Christensen**



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**Asia**  
Thomson Learning  
5 Shenton Way #01-01  
UIC Building  
Singapore 068808

**Australia**  
Nelson Thomson Learning  
102 Dodds Street  
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*To  
the futures of  
Adam David, Lee Daniel, and  
Rachel Sarah Gerston*

*and*

*the memories of  
Anna and Teter Christensen and  
Tillie and Chester Welliever*

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Larry N. Gerston, professor of political science at San Jose State University, attempts to blend politics and theory whenever possible, viewing both as key components of the political process. He has worked for a Los Angeles County supervisor and a California assembly member. Professor Gerston has written *Making Public Policy: From Conflict to Resolution* (1983), *American Government: Politics, Process, and Policies* (1993), *Public Policy Making: Process and Principles* (1997), and *Public Policymaking in a Democratic Society: A Guide to Civic Engagement* (2002). He has co-authored *Politics in the Golden State* (1984, 1988, with Terry Christensen) and *The Deregulated Society* (1988, with Cynthia Fraleigh and Robert Schwab). Professor Gerston writes a monthly column on politics for *San Jose Magazine* and has served since 1980 as the political analyst for television station NBC11 in San Jose. Between elections and other political adventures, he enjoys his wife, Elisa, and their three children, Adam, Lee, and Rachel.

Terry Christensen, professor of political science at San Jose State University, teaches and writes on California state and local politics and British politics. He has authored *Neighborhood Survival* (1979), a book about urban renewal in London; *Movers and Shakers* (1982, with Philip J. Trounstein), a study of community power; *Reel Politics* (1987), an analysis of American political movies; and *Local Politics: Governing at the Grassroots* (1995). A longtime political activist, Christensen has worked with a wide variety of community organizations and political campaigns and has served as a delegate to the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council and as a member of the Democratic State Central Committee. As his history may suggest, he advocates learning by participant observation, and he helped develop San Jose State's extensive internship program. He was selected San Jose State University's Outstanding Professor for 1997-1998.

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# PREFACE

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*California Politics and Government* is designed as a brief introduction for observers, participants, and first-time students of California politics. We have attempted to cover the topic in a readable fashion, balancing the basics of state politics and government with analysis, color, and brevity. As with earlier editions, we emphasize California's political institutions and processes. The state's historical evolution dominates our first chapter. Succeeding chapters on political institutions include their historical development as well as their current operations. Cultural diversity is another theme that runs through every chapter. We have included the nuts and bolts of the political process and institutions, along with frequent references to the people, groups, and issues that move them. Most of all, we have tried to make sense out of the maze of contradictions known as California.

In earlier editions of this book, we noted the rapidity of change in California and its politics. Yet, as we complete work on the seventh edition, we continue to marvel at change as one of the few constants in California. Some of the changes involve elections and term limits, including those from the 2002 election, which are discussed throughout the book. Other changes stem from the state's economy, which thrived at the beginning of the new millennium but is now in recession, resulting in a huge budget deficit and a crisis in state services. The budget crisis has been exacerbated by the energy crisis of 2001 and the "war on terrorism." All of these and other recent events are discussed in this new edition.

As in the previous edition, we have integrated discussion of public policy issues and political institutions, rather than including a separate chapter on public policy. We did this to shorten and tighten the book, but we also believe this clarifies the relationship between politics, political institutions, and public policy outcomes. We have also continued our expansion of the chapter on state-federal relations, as the composition of the state's congressional delegation changes and issues such as immigration, affirmative action, the environment, and federal spending continue to attract attention. Included in this chapter is a timely discussion of the impact of the national war on terrorism on California.

We have also updated and expanded two sections at the end of each chapter. “Learn More on the World Wide Web” provides students and instructors with useful Web sites pertinent to the topics of each chapter, and “Learn More at the Library” refers readers to some of our own favorite books on the topics. As previously, key terms, institutions, and events appear in bold throughout the book. These terms are briefly defined in the glossary at the back of our book to provide a quick reference source for students.

Many friends and colleagues helped us develop and produce this book. Adam Gerston, Wendy Chang, and Jason Yee provided timely and intrepid research assistance. Elisa Gerston provided valuable in-house editing, for which the bleary-eyed authors are grateful. Public workers in the governor’s office, the legislature, the courts, and elsewhere helped us in our search for the most up-to-date data. Colleagues at San Jose State University and elsewhere offered suggestions which we followed and appreciated (send more!). We continue to learn from our students and our many friends in politics, journalism, and academia.

We’re grateful to the production staff at Thomson/Wadsworth who worked on an unusually tight schedule. They include David Tatom, executive editor, political science; Stacey Sims, senior developmental editor; Emily Smith, associate project editor, editorial production; Janise Fry, marketing manager; and Suzanne Kastner, production manager. To these and many others, we offer our deepest thanks.

Larry N. Gerston

Terry Christensen

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CHAPTER 1

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

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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 their decisions overturned by the courts. No wonder some Californians are confused or disillusioned about politics and disdain 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, and new technologies repeatedly transform the state's economy. The resulting disparate ethnic and economic interests compete for the benefits and protections conferred by government and 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 from Asia to Alaska thousands of years ago and then headed south.

By 1769 about 300,000 Native Americans were living mostly near the coast of what is now California when the Spaniards colonized 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 100,000 by 1849. Disease and massacres wiped out entire 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 Ocean. 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 15,000 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, owning 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 jobs became scarce in the 1870s because of a depression. 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 these groups tolerant of the corrupt practices and favoritism of the machine, which many thought 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 ~~non-partisan~~ 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 **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 those of the Workingmen's party before them, most Progressives were concerned about immigration. Antagonism toward recently arrived Japanese immigrants (72,000 by 1910) led the Progressives to ban land ownership by aliens and to support the National Immigration Act of 1924, which effectively halted Japanese immigration. More positive 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 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 2 million in the 1920s (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, bringing 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 reached a crescendo in the early 1930s, 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.

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

YEAR	POPULATION	PERCENTAGE 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	33,871,648	12.6

SOURCE: U.S. Census.

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. 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 \$10 million 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 California's economy. The defense industries that supplemented California's industrial base during the war became permanent fixtures, with aerospace and electronics adding to their momentum.