

CALIFORNIA Its Government



and Politics

Michael J. Ross

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Its Government and Politics

FOURTH EDITION

Michael J. Ross
San Diego State University



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*For Timothy Kevin, age 4
and
Matthew Dennis, age 1
Daddy's love is as big as California itself.*

About the Author

MICHAEL J. ROSS has a Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School and a law degree from the University of San Diego Law School, and teaches at San Diego State University. His academic interests include state and local government, political parties and elections, and constitutional law. He has also written *State and Local Politics and Policy: Change and Reform*, and co-written *Politics, Parties, and Power*. A native Californian who has lived in San Francisco, San Jose, Carmel, Los Angeles, and San Diego, Ross offers an insider's view of California government.

Preface

California: Its Government and Politics serves three purposes. (1) Its brevity and readability make it suitable as a supplement in lower-division courses on United States or California government. (2) It contains the information necessary for the California section of upper-division courses on American state and local government. (3) It is directed to any reader who is trying to make some sense out of what may appear to be buzzing confusion in Sacramento or in city hall. I describe California government in a manner that is clear, concise, and lively.

For this edition, Chapter 1 has been completely rewritten to include the public policy issues that Californians confront as we near the end of this century. I have emphasized recent developments in the transportation, environmental, and public safety areas. The chapters on federalism, politics, the legislature, courts, and local government have been substantially revised. I emphasize the ways in which the national defense build-down may affect California; the new environment for the state's political parties; term limits and legislative reform; the conservative California supreme court; and the issue of growth control. I have also added sections on the state's Progressive heritage and on "government in the sunshine," a reform that clearly reflects that heritage. Since writing the last edition, I have received a law degree: this new knowledge is reflected in the chapter on the courts and elsewhere. Throughout I emphasize not only the institutional features of state and local government, but also the power struggles, ideological controversies, and engaging personalities that characterize California. The Glossary includes definitions of more than 100 key terms (they are set in boldface type at their first appearance in the text).

I wish to thank the numerous people who helped me write this book. Many instructors used the previous edition; their support has been very gratifying. The following reviewers were capable and discerning: George Blair, Claremont McKenna College; Eugene Dvorin, California State University, Los Angeles; David Gjestland, California State University, Fullerton; Joseph Moore, Fresno City College; Linda Norman, California State University, San Bernardino; Thomas Watts, California State University, Bakersfield;

and Gary Wiedle, College of the Desert. Sponsoring editor Cindy Stormer and production editor Penelope Sky eased the book through various writings and rewritings.

The men and women who settled California long ago came with courage and hope in their hearts. May we live the same way.

—MICHAEL J. ROSS

Contents



PART 1 **Setting of California** **Government and Politics**

1

CHAPTER 1: Policy Issues 3

- The State's Economy 6
- Environment 9
- Energy 15
- Transportation 19
- Water 20
- Agriculture 23
- Education 24
- Welfare, Health, and Housing 28
- Public Safety 34
- Other Issues 40

CHAPTER 2: California in the Federal System 45

- The California Constitution 45
- Changing the Constitution 48
- Relations with Other State Governments 49
- Nation–State Relations 51
- Fiscal Relationships 52
- California in the U.S. Congress 56



PART 2 **Political Organizations** **and Processes**

61

CHAPTER 3: Politics, Parties, and Elections 63

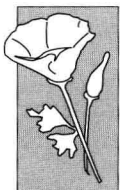
- Antipartyism 63
- The Progressive Heritage and Recent Elections 69
- The Two Arenas of California Politics 83
- Voter Registration, Absentee Voting 87
- Primary, General, and Special Elections 89
- Campaign Spending 91
- Political Reform 96
- A New Environment for the Parties? 96

CHAPTER 4: Interest Groups 101

- Lobbyists 102
- Techniques of Interest Groups 103
- Regulation of Lobbying 111
- Attributes of Effective Interest Groups 111

CHAPTER 5: Direct Democracy 115

- Initiative 115
- Referendum 117
- Pros and Cons 118
- The Distortion of the Process 124
- Recall 126
- Direct Democracy at the Local Level 127



PART 3 **Major Institutions**

131

CHAPTER 6: Executive Branch 133

- Powers of the Governor 133
- George Deukmejian as Governor: An Analysis 139
- Cabinet, Agencies, and Departments 141
- Other State Constitutional Officers 144
- Boards and Commissions 149

Government in the Sunshine 156
 State Civil Service 157

CHAPTER 7: Legislature 163

Structure and Characteristics of the
 Legislature 163
 Leadership in the Legislature 165
 Legislative Procedure 168
 Employees of the Legislature 173
 Rating the California Legislature 175
 Legislative Reform 176

CHAPTER 8: Courts 181

Municipal Courts 181
 Justice Courts 183
 Superior Courts 184
 Courts of Appeal 184
 California Supreme Court 185
 Commission on Judicial Appointments 187
 Commission on Judicial Nominees Evaluation 188
 Commission on Judicial Performance 188
 Judicial Council 189
 Electoral Vulnerability of Judges 189
 The New California Supreme Court 192
 Juries 194
 Evaluating California's Court System 196



PART 4 Local Government and State and Local Government Finance

199

CHAPTER 9: Counties, Cities, Special Districts, and Regional Agencies 201

Perspective on California's Counties 201
 County Budget 202
 Types of Counties 203
 County Officers 204
 Perspective on California's Cities 208

City Budget	209
Incorporation	211
Forms of City Government	212
City Councils in Action	214
Contracting and Cooperation	215
Hard Choices Ahead for Cities	217
Special Districts	220
Regional Agencies	222
The Mandates Issue	222

CHAPTER 10: Expenditures, Revenue, and Debt 225

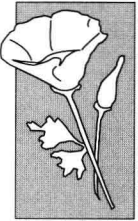
State Spending	225
State Revenue	227
California Taxes	228
The Property Tax and Proposition 13	230
Other Sources of Income	232
The Gann Limit	234
Debt	235

GLOSSARY 239

INDEX 247

PART 1

Setting of California Government and Politics



Political issues touch nearly every aspect of our lives in California. We can't get away from questions of public policy. How can we create more jobs in California? What is

being done about air pollution? Do we need urban mass transit? How is education to be financed? Are the needs of the state's poor and elderly being met? Does the state have an adequate energy supply? Will California be able to meet its future water needs? Are taxes too high?

In chapter 1 we consider these and other issues. We also note that California state and local governments have attempted to resolve these issues and have been reasonably successful, even in the wake of the belt tightening necessitated by the Jarvis property-tax amendment. In chapter 2 we point out that California need not grapple alone with these problems. The federal government and other state governments (through interstate compacts) can lend assistance. We also point out that almost every major contemporary policy issue involves all levels of govern-

ment: federal, state, and local. The primary reason for multilevel governmental involvement in most issues is that the federal government transfers substantial amounts of money to the state government, counties, cities, and school districts.

Decision makers address issues such as energy, transportation, and education in a series of overlapping stages that might be termed a policy process. At all levels of government, decision makers follow roughly five steps as they deal with policy issues. One step may begin before another is actually completed.

1. *Problem identification:* Public decision makers are presented with demands for action to resolve a problem.
2. *Policy formulation:* A course of action is chosen after various alternatives for dealing with a problem have been considered.
3. *Adoption:* A legitimate source of authority—for example, the state legislature or a city mayor—gives approval and often appropriates money for the course of action chosen.

4. *Implementation:* The policy, or plan of action, is carried out.
 5. *Evaluation:* Decision makers determine whether the plan of action is accomplishing its objectives and whether adjustments need to be made in the policy.
- This process of determination-implementation-evaluation is not static but dynamic. It is appropriate that a dynamic process should be utilized by a state that usually seems to be in motion—California.

Policy Issues

Over the years, California has meant many different things to different people. To millions of Americans, it has represented (and still represents) hope—a hope for something better than they have had—and that hope is why they came here. To other Americans, California has stood for diversity, opportunity, and the chance to break out of the restrictive patterns of the past. This state has also stood for creativity and innovation. (For example, political scientists rate California state government as one of the most innovative in the nation.) Carey McWilliams writes that restless California is the “giant adolescent [who] has been outgrowing its governmental clothes, now, for a hundred years. . . . Other states have gone through this phase too, but California has never emerged from it.”¹

Indisputably, California has meant growth. And until recently, Californians have welcomed growth as a blessing. A state of considerable size geographically (see figure 1.1), it is first in population (with over 30 million people) and therefore has the largest number of members in the U.S. House of Representatives (fifty-two) and of electoral votes (fifty-four). As a result of the 1990 census, California received an increase of seven House seats. During the 1980s, California grew by 26.1 percent, which is more than twice the national growth rate of 10.2 percent. In the early 1990s, migration from other states may slow because of high living costs in this state (especially the cost of housing), enhanced economic opportunities in other parts of the country, and perceptions of California as characterized by smog, crowded freeways, and earthquakes. In any event, the state is growing in some unexpected locations: the sparsely populated rural areas of the Sierra Nevada foothills are showing large percentage increases. People fleeing urban congestion and smog may head for El Dorado County or Placer County. Among more urban counties, Riverside and San Bernardino are experiencing rapid increases. Slightly more than half of the statewide increase resulted from immigration, and the rest from natural increase (births exceeding deaths). California’s foreign-born population has more than doubled in the past decade: recent immigrants have come from the Americas and from Asia rather than from Europe. The state’s availability of jobs, convenient location, and history of non-European migration have

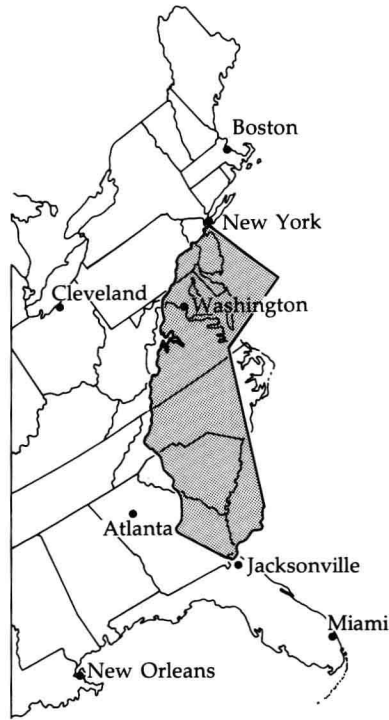


FIGURE 1.1 Giant California superimposed on the East Coast. Reprinted by permission from the *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1978, pt. I, p. 3.

spurred this immigration, which has settled overwhelmingly in metropolitan areas.

Other changes have affected, and will continue to affect, the state's population. According to one prediction, the next two decades will see California's working-age population stabilize and its retirement-age population grow.² As the labor force matures because there are fewer very young and very old workers, this more experienced labor force should be more productive and earn higher wages. A greater number of working wives also increases family earning power, which in turn fuels consumer demand for goods and services. As more women enter the work force and as the state's retirement-age population increases, day care for children and medical care for the elderly become important governmental issues.

Rapid population increase has fostered rapid social change in other respects as well. California has been on the cutting edge of new trends, new beliefs, and new lifestyles. People often say that if you want to see the future,

look at California. Whether you consider the results good or bad, the Golden State has often led the way in everything from tax revolts to Eastern mystical cults. One writer notes that "this state leads the nation in pornography, . . . suicide, home burglary, mind-meddling cults, and skateboard accidents. At the same time, perhaps for the same reasons, it leads the nation in microelectronics, solar energy, accredited law schools, Nobel Prize winners, women mayors, Olympic medalists, library use, salad lettuce, dates, figs, and nectarines."³ The U.S. Census Bureau, which has the responsibility for gathering information on an amazing variety of topics, lists California's rankings on a number of key indicators (see table 1.1).

California is also characterized by highly **advanced industrialism**. The state relies on high-technology industry based on scientific expertise for the sustained application of theoretical knowledge for practical ends. The best

Table 1.1 California's Rankings

Item	Ranking
Total population (1990)	1
Land area in square miles (1990)	3
Population per square mile (1987)	12
Percentage of population in metropolitan area (1987)	2
Percentage of population under eighteen years old (1987)	23
Percentage of population sixty-five years old and older (1987)	40
Larino population (1980)	3
Black population (1980)	21
Asian and Pacific Islander population (1980)	2
American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleur population (1980)	15
Marriage rate per 1,000 population (1987)	32
Divorce rate per 1,000 population (1987)	26
Personal income per capita (1987)	7
Homeownership rate (1980)	48
Median value of owner-occupied housing units (1980)	2
Violent crime rate per 100,000 population (1987)	3
Homicide death rate per 100,000 population (1986)	9
Motor vehicle theft rate per 100,000 population (1987)	3
Police officers per 10,000 population (1986)	14
Federal and state prisoners per 100,000 population (1981)	27
Percentage high school graduates (persons twenty-five years old and older in 1980)	11
Undergraduate enrollment in institutions of higher education (1979)	1
Motor vehicles per 1,000 population (1980)	22
Percentage of workers commuting to work (1980)	29
Percentage of workers commuting in car pools (1980)	47
Motor vehicle traffic fatalities per 100,000 licensed drivers (1980)	31
Energy consumption per capita (1980)	42
Death rate per 100,000 population because of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (1986)	4

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Significant Rankings among Fifty States: California" (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1984); Kathleen Morgan et al., eds., *1990 State Rankings* (Lawrence, Kans.: Morgan Quirno Corporation, 1990). Reprinted by permission.

example of such “knowledge-intensive” manufacturing is electronics. Furthermore, 30 percent of all U.S. aeronautical engineers are located in California. Sophisticated technology depends upon research and development (R & D, as it is called), in which the state excels: California is a national leader in higher education and in the creation of knowledge. Both the government and private industry make vast sums of money available to the state’s universities and research institutes for R & D purposes. The key role of universities in generating the new knowledge and technology necessary to support advanced industries can be seen from the fact that Santa Clara’s Silicon Valley grew up around Stanford University; other important high-tech centers are in Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties. Industrialization has affected other areas of California’s economy as well. Because of the high degree of automation in the state’s farms and factories, fewer people are needed to work in these sectors, and more people can work in service jobs, which are increasing in number. Seven out of ten Californians work in service industries, such as education, medicine, law, insurance, communications, banking, real estate, transportation, and government, rather than in manufacturing of heavy durable goods.

A gloomy report issued in the mid-1980s by SRI International, a Menlo Park think tank, declared that California was losing its edge in high-technology manufacturing and marketing competitiveness; that is, in the industries most likely to generate increased wealth.⁴ Causes of the purported decline include the erosion of foreign markets, diminished productivity, reduced educational quality, and less spending on freeway construction and repair. The SRI report compared California’s economy to “a fine luxury car cruising down the freeway with red warning lights on the dashboard.” Whether or not the report’s conclusions are accurate, life in a highly advanced industrial state like California is becoming highly complex, its development characterized by rapid change and innovation. In this chapter, we consider the numerous policy issues facing the Golden State.

THE STATE’S ECONOMY

If California were a nation, its **gross national product (GNP)** would rank sixth in the world. If it is to continue to flourish economically, California must retain its lead in the aerospace, semiconductor, computer, biotechnology, and other high-technology industries. These industries provide jobs, and they pay significant amounts of taxes. States such as Texas, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, and Tennessee are trying to lure these employers away. Additional targets of job-hungry states are the furniture-making, apparel, and plastics industries. California is aided by its climatic and cultural advantages, the size and quality of its markets, its access to investment capital, the availability of many state-supported services, its location as gateway to the Pacific Basin, and especially its huge highway system. However, firms deciding to locate or remain in this state sometimes assert that it has liabilities: occupational safety and health regulations that surpass federal