



THE CAPITOL CONNECTION

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LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR:

Spring recess begins upon adjournment
March 21

Legislature reconvenes
April 1

Last day for policy committees to report same house non-fiscal bills to fiscal committees
April 26

FACILITIES, JUDICIAL RETIREMENT HIGHLIGHT JUDICIAL COUNCIL'S LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS



The Judicial Council, through its Office of Governmental Affairs, develops legislative proposals for introduction as council-sponsored bills each year.

With the February 22 deadline to introduce bills having passed, now is a good time to highlight the council's sponsored legislation program for 2002.

Among the key issues the council is addressing through proposed legislation is court facilities. SB 1732 (Escutia) has been introduced as a "spot bill." Co-sponsored with the California State Association of Counties, this bill is intended to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Court Facilities regarding the transfer of responsibility for trial court facilities from the counties to the state. This proposal, following previous legislation dealing with funding of trial court operations and the governance of court employees, would complete the full transition of trial court responsibility to the state.

The council is co-sponsoring legislation with the California Judges Association (CJA) to conform certain retirement benefits for judges with those of other public employees. AB 2879 (Strom-Martin) gives judges the same ability as other state employees to select a "designated beneficiary" rather than limiting the selection to "surviving spouse." Also, the bill eliminates the minimum age for service retirement requirement for judges with 20 years in service who die while in office. This provision also mirrors the existing practice for other state employees. Last, AB 2879 conforms the compensation of a retired judge assigned to serve on a court of appeal or the Supreme Court to that of a retired judge assigned to serve on a trial court.

Retired judges will also be interested in AB 2065 (Nakano), also co-sponsored with CJA, which extends to retired judges the confidentiality of home addresses in records of the Department of Motor Ve-

(Continued on page 3)

LEGISLATURE TAKES AIM AT PRIVATE ARBITRATION

Private dispute resolution and those who provide it are again the subject of legislation that is intended to ensure fairness in private arbitration settings. On Monday, March 11, Assembly members Ellen Corbett (D-San Leandro) and Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), the current and outgoing chairs of the Assembly Judiciary Committee, announced the introduction of a package of bills that responds to perceptions that private arbitration processes are stacked against consumers. This announcement follows an informational hearing held by the committee in February

that explored several serious issues affecting the fairness of the mandatory arbitration process.

Some of the proposals specifically address the impact that a prospective career in private arbitration has on sitting judges. Recent press reports have alleged that judges looking to move into private judging may seek assignments that would make them more attractive to arbitration firms. It was argued that the active recruit-

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PRIVATE ARBITRATION

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ment of sitting judges could even affect the outcomes of cases, especially those in which arbitration clauses are at issue. To address this matter, the proposed legislation would prohibit arbitration firms from recruiting sitting judges and impose a minimum time period that a judge must wait after leaving the bench before going to work as a private arbitrator.

The perception of conflicts of interest also arises because companies who impose mandatory arbitration on their customers are repeat users of private arbitration firms. Critics contend that arbitrators and the organizations that employ them have a financial interest in keeping their corporate clients satisfied. Also, arbitration organizations often have business relationships with clients for whom they provide arbitration services, such as consulting contracts. The proposals include provisions to prohibit companies from designating an exclusive arbitration provider in consumer contracts and to regulate how providers solicit business.

The legislation would also prohibit providers from engaging in any business with a party, including investing, other than the direct provision of dispute resolution services.

In an effort to reduce the financial hardship that some consumers may face in deciding whether to pursue a case through mandatory arbitration, the package announced by the committee would require a waiver of provider fees in certain circumstances and would prohibit arbitration rules that require the loser to pay the winner's share of the arbitration fees. The proponents state that consumers would also benefit from clarification that provider organizations are not entitled to absolute immunity for any wrongdoing in mandatory consumer arbitrations.

The Judicial Council will review these proposals after specific language is amended into existing committee bills. *The Capitol Connection* will continue to report on these bills as they move through the Legislature.

LEGISLATURE SEEKS CONFORMITY WITH FEDERAL TAX LAW

Last year's federal Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act (EGTRRA) made a number of changes regarding the amounts that can be contributed towards IRAs, 401(k) retirement plans, and 457 deferred compensation programs. For the 2002 tax year, under federal law, the maximum amount that can be contributed to 401(k) and 457 plans is \$11,000 per year. The maximum increases every year up to an annual limit of \$15,000 for the 2006 tax year. In addition, certain 457 plan participants within three years of retirement may contribute even more than \$11,000 as a catch-up provision.

Many Americans welcome these changes as a way to reduce their taxable income and increase their retirement income. In California, however, the initial delight felt by many has given way to confusion as it has become clear that benefits offered by the new federal rules cannot be fully realized in California until appropriate changes are made to the state's tax laws. While some states' tax laws automatically track the federal laws that are in effect in any given year, California's laws are based on the federal laws in effect on January 1, 1998 and cannot be updated without legislative action.

Many California residents have decided to increase their contributions to the various retirement plans with the expectation that state lawmakers will pass legislation that conforms California's Revenue and Taxation Code to the new federal rules. Without the conforming legislation,

they potentially face increased state tax liability, as contribution amounts that are non-deductible under state tax law are included as taxable income. Even worse, an entire retirement account could be disqualified for state income tax purposes. And this is on top of increased recordkeeping burdens.

State lawmakers have acknowledged the need for legislative action so that California residents can enjoy the full range of the federal tax relief measure and several have introduced bills to achieve conformity, all of which would be retroactively effective beginning January 1, 2002. These include SB 657 by Sen. Jack Scott (D-Altadena), which has cleared the Senate and is now in the Assembly; AB 1743 by Assembly Member John Campbell (R-Irvine), which has not yet been heard in committee; and AB 1122 by Assembly Member Ellen Corbett (D-San Leandro) which is in the Senate but still must return to the Assembly because it has been amended in the Senate.

Another bill, Assembly Member Corbett's AB 1744 specifically addresses issues regarding soon-to-retain public employees by offering a limited opportunity for 457 plan participants who retire after January 1, 2002 and before conforming legislation is enacted to take advantage of some election options of EGTRRA. AB 1744 has passed the Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee and will next be considered by the Appropriations Committee.

LEGISLATURE RESPONDS TO TERRORIST ATTACKS

The impact of September 11 continues to be felt throughout the country. For their part, legislators in California have responded by introducing more than 100 bills this year to address a variety of issues that the state faces in the aftermath.

The bills cover a wide range of topics, from general state-level preparedness such as SB 1350 (Burton and McPherson), which would require the Office of Emergency Services to develop specified training relative to terrorism awareness and response, to more specific responses, such as AB 2513 (LaSuer), which would add "potato" guns to the definition of destructive devices in the Penal Code.

Also, there are a number of bills that seek to expand the circumstances and expedite the process in which law enforcement may obtain wiretaps. AB 2343 (Robert Pacheco and Rod Pacheco) adds possession of weapons of mass destruction or destructive devices to the list of suspected offenses for which a wiretap may be sought. This bill would allow prosecutors to seek oral approval

from judges for wiretaps in emergency situations. AB 74 (Washington) would, among other things, permit a presiding judge to designate a sequence of judges to be available to hear applications for wiretap orders.

Changes to civil law are also contemplated as a way of ensuring local communities are protected from terrorism. AB 2578 (Alquist) would make neighborhood associations and community groups engaged in, or training for, emergency preparedness, emergency response, emergency relief or support activity exempt from liability for civil damages for any act or omission committed while engaging in those activities.

Other anti-terrorism bills would enhance the sentence for terrorism-related offenses. For example, AB 2107 (Strickland) would provide a sentence of up to 25 years for a conviction of money laundering in connection with certain terrorist acts.



The Supreme Court's seven justices pose for a group photo that includes the high court's newest member, Associate Justice Carlos R. Moreno. Pictured en banc in the Court's Sacramento Courtroom, from left to right: Associate Justice Janice R. Brown, Associate Justice Joyce L. Kennard, Associate Justice Kathryn Mickle Werdegar, Chief Justice Ronald M. George, Associate Justice Ming W. Chin, Associate Justice Marvin R. Baxter, and Associate Justice Carlos R. Moreno.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL-SPONSORED LEGISLATION

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hicles. This bill is also intended to address other issues related to confidential home addresses for active and retired judges.

The process for filing tort claims against judicial branch entities would be clarified through another council-sponsored bill, AB 2321 (Hertzberg). This bill will help to ensure timely and fair adjudication of claims by providing that claims against trial courts are to be filed locally and referred to the Administrative Office of the Courts for investigation.

Conversion of certain subordinate judicial officer positions to judgeships is addressed in AB 1698 (Committee on Judiciary). This bill has passed the Assembly and will be heard next by the Senate Judiciary Committee. For more information on this bill, please see the December 2001/January 2002 edition of *The Capitol Connection*.

The council is also seeking legislative changes in the areas of court operations, civil practice, and court security, in conjunction with the California State Sheriffs' Association. *The Capitol Connection* will provide regular status reports on these and other court-related bills as they move through the Legislature.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES...

“Ripped From the Headlines” highlights news stories of interest including headlines and lead paragraphs, without editorial comment from *The Capitol Connection*.

“State Law Governs Arbitration, Court Rules: The 9th Circuit strikes Circuit City’s mandatory arbitration, saying it is invalid under California law.” *Daily Journal* (February 5, 2002)

Expanding employee protection against “unconscionable” mandatory arbitration agreements, a federal appeals court held Monday that businesses must provide evenhanded arbitration terms or their agreements will be declared invalid under state contract laws.

“Arbitration gets a working over; Witnesses grilled at hearing” *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 13, 2002)

The state Assembly’s judiciary committee grilled lawyers, judges and the public yesterday on the abuses of mandatory arbitration, eliciting a broad range of proposals for making the private system of resolving disputes fairer, cheaper and more accountable to consumers.

While promising to offer legislation “that will protect the people,” committee Chairman Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, and his colleagues listened as witnesses suggested that the Legislature strip arbitrators of their immunity for lawsuits, bar arbitrators for soliciting business and make records of arbitration hearings public.

“DCA Says You Can’t Be Convicted of a Non-Existent Crime; Conspiracy to commit attempted murder? There’s no such thing, the court says of a gang shooting case.” *Daily Journal* (February 13, 2002)

First there was “a little pregnant.” Then there was “jumbo shrimp.” Talk about oxymorons. Now comes “conspiracy to commit attempted murder.”



But how can you think up a plan to unsuccessfully kill someone? You can’t, the 3rd District Court of Appeal ruled Monday in *People v. Iniguez*, 2002 DJDAR 1719, rejecting Iniguez’s crime as “non existent.”

“Big Money Now Making Impact in Judicial Elections” *Los Angeles Times* (February 14, 2002)

Big-money politics and TV attack-ad campaigns have invaded the once-staid world of judicial elections in recent years, a trend that highlights the difficulty of truly limiting the influence of money in politics.

Election spending by state supreme court justices has more than doubled since 1994, according to a report to be released today. But spending by interest groups has grown even faster, so much so that candidates for judicial seats sometime have been turned into bystanders in their own races.

“Kids’ deaths bring foster care review” *Daily News* (February 17, 2002)

With deaths of children in foster care rising sharply, Los Angeles County officials have braced for a federal probe of the programs responsible for the well-being of the county’s 60,000 fos-

ter kids.

At the same time, the county is fighting an appellate court order designed to save foster children’s lives by requiring social workers to visit them at least once a month – a goal that has been impossible to meet because of lack of staff and more recently by job actions by social workers.

Children’s advocates say the monthly visits are essential to ensure children in the nation’s largest foster care system are not being harmed in foster homes.

“Bad Warrants May Be Actionable” *Daily Journal* (February 19, 2002)

The failure of police officials to correct the recurring problem of mistakenly jailing people based on the wrong warrant constitutes a “policy of inaction” that makes them liable for civil rights violations, a federal appeals court has held in a Long Beach case.



The 9th U.S. Circuit Court Appeals ruling Friday puts cities on notice that if they ignore such problems they may be held liable for significant civil rights damages.

“Accountants boycott state hearing; CPAs fear bias by lawmakers because of Enron scandal” *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 20, 2002)

The nation’s large accounting firms and a lobbying group representing certified public accountants boycotted an Assembly hearing yesterday into whether California should change its laws in the aftermath of the Enron scandal.

The CPA group said it refused to attend the daylong hearing because members feared it would turn into a bias and unfair critique of the accounting profession that would benefit trial lawyers who sue corporations for misleading the public about their profits.

“Felons can keep profits, justices rule; State high court tosses law governing book, film deals” *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 22, 2002)

In a broad defense of free speech rights, a unanimous California Supreme Court struck down yesterday a state law requiring felons to turn over profits from books and movies to their victims.

The seven justices said the state’s “Son of Sam” law violates the First Amendment because it makes a target of a criminal’s books, films, articles, performances and other protected “expressive works” solely because they include an account of the crime.

“Elected Judges Are a Rare Breed Indeed” *Los Angeles Times* (February 22, 2002)

Fewer than 10% of all judgeships in California were filled in contested elections in 1996, 1998 and 2000, according to a 2001 Judicial Council study. Fewer than half of those involved incumbents.

It’s what Robert M. Stern of the California Commission on

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RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES...

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Campaign Financing calls “the myth of elected judges.”

“Juror Relief May Turn to Grief; Judges say prosecutors’ chronic failure to be ready on time could jeopardize the effectiveness of the ‘one-trial’ system.” *Los Angeles Times* (February 24, 2002)

The Los Angeles County district attorney’s chronic failure to be ready for trial on time threatens the effectiveness of the popular “one-trial” jury system, scheduled to expand to the largest court-houses downtown next month, top legal officials say.

Several judges said that although the one-trial system is working elsewhere, delays blamed on prosecutors in Los Angeles could create a ripple effect that limits juror availability. They are concerned that dozens of jurors would not be used the day they report to court – as required by state law – and therefore would, under the one-day, one-trial system, be excused for at least a year.

As a result, the downtown district, which draws jurors from within a 20-mile radius, would cause strain in other court districts by pulling jurors from shared territories. “We’re going to have vacuum cleaners sucking up jurors in districts with overlapping radii,” said Van Nuys Superior Court Judge Paul Gutman. Judges say prosecutors in Los Angeles are especially responsible for the concerns because they are repeatedly unprepared for trial.

“Greed or Just Green? Flood of new California environment claims re-ignites battle over law.”

The National Law Journal (February 26, 2002)

In the last few days of December, Kamran Ghalchi sent more than 3,000 California businesses an unwelcome holiday greeting – legal notices claiming they were in violation of Proposition 65, a one-of-a kind California law requiring warning on products that contain potentially dangerous chemicals.

Defense lawyers and California’s attorney general are concerned that the huge volume of notices, along with 1,300 more filed by other lawyers in December, may be more about lining lawyers’ pockets than improving California’s environment.

“I think that there’s an odor of extortion around many of these notices that concerns me,” says California Attorney General Bill Lockyer. “I hope that firms won’t pay ransom to make these issues go away.”

According to Ghalchi, he and the other lawyers are being demonized to advance the political ends of businesses that have no love for Proposition 65.

“Fee Increases Target Campers to Collegians” *Los Angeles Times* (February 26, 2002)

California’s deepening budget crisis has raised the prospect that state officials may tap not only polluters and power producers to help balance the budget but college students and campers as well.

Motorists could be forced to fork over more for ignoring a stop sign. Nature enthusiasts could be expected to dig deeper into

their pockets to visit a state park. Ditto for students who dream of becoming doctors, lawyers or dentists.

Gov. Davis released a list last month of more than \$140 million in fee and penalty increases aimed at polluters, power producers and traffic violators, among others. But potential payees expanded from the politically unpopular to include feel-good favorites after the state’s legislative analyst, Elizabeth Hill, warned lawmakers last week that California’s projected budget shortfall has grown by \$5 billion to \$17.5 billion.

“Board Adopts Requirement That Contractors With County Pay Workers for Jury Duty”

Metropolitan News (February 27, 2002)

Businesses that win Los Angeles County contracts will have to pay for at least five days of jury service for each of their full-time employees, under an ordinance unanimously approved yesterday by the county Board of Supervisors.

The new law will go into effect March 28. Companies with 10 or fewer employees and less than \$500,000 annual gross revenues, and firms that do less than \$50,000 a year in county business would be exempt from the new requirement.

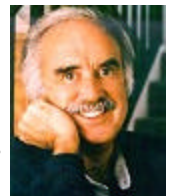
The new ordinance makes Los Angeles the only county in the state with such a contracting requirement.

“California Justices OK Prop 21” *The Recorder* (March 1, 2002)

By a 6-1 vote, the justices declared the controversial measure constitutional, saying it does not violate the separation-of-powers doctrine or defendants’ due-process and equal-protection rights. They also ruled that the measure doesn’t run afoul of the single-subject rule for ballot initiatives, though a couple of the justices reached that conclusion for different reasons.

“Labor agencies join battle against forced arbitration; Burton bill seeks to preserve right to state’s protection” *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 1, 2002)

The state agencies that protect the rights of California workers have joined the fight against mandatory arbitration, moving to stop the private system of resolving disputes from encroaching on their power to hear complaints against employers.



Prompted by the state Department of Fair Employment and Housing, Sen. John Burton, D-San Francisco, introduced legislation last week that would prohibit companies from forcing workers to arbitrate a discrimination claim rather than file it with the agency.

In an opinion issued Feb. 19, the Office of the State Labor Commissioner insisted that it would hear all wage claims, regardless of whether they are covered by mandatory arbitration agreement.

Together, the actions indicated growing concern among government watchdogs that their ability to police civil rights violations is threatened by employers who force workplace disputes out of the public eye and into private arbitration hearings.

TERM-LIMITED LEGISLATORS: SOME SUCCEED, OTHERS FAIL

As *The Capitol Connection* reported recently, term limits have caused a number of state lawmakers to seek other elective offices. With the March 5 primary now behind us, here is look at how these legislators fared with voters.

NOTE: With the exception of Los Angeles City Council, the races below will be decided in the November election.

Primary Result	Legislator	Term Limited in 2002?	Current Office	New Office Legislator is Running For	Is This an Open Seat?	Incumbent (Reason Incumbent is Leaving)
LOST	Dickerson (R-Redding)	NO	AD 2	SD 04	YES	Maurice Johannessen (termed out in 2002)
WON	Aanestad (R-Grass Valley)	NO	AD 3	SD 04	YES	Maurice Johannessen (termed out in 2002)
WON	Shelley (D-San Francisco)	YES	AD 12	SOS	YES	Bill Jones (termed out in 2002)
WON	Migden (D-San Francisco)	YES	AD 13	BOE 01	YES	Johan Klehs (termed out in 2002)
LOST	Leach (R-Walnut Creek)	YES	AD 15	SPI	YES	Delaine Eastin (termed out in 2002)
WON	Cardoza (D-Merced)	YES	AD 26	US House of Representatives	NO	Gary Condit
LOST	Briggs (R-Clovis)	NO	AD 29	US House of Representatives	YES	No incumbent
WON	Florez (D-Shafter)	NO	AD 30	SD 16	YES	Jim Costa (termed out in 2002)
WON	Ashburn (R-Bakersfield)	YES	AD 32	SD 18	YES	Jack O'Connell (running for SPI)
Votes still being counted	Cardenas (D-Sylmar)	YES	AD 39	L.A. City Council	YES	Seat currently vacant
WON	Cedillo (D-Los Angeles)	NO	AD 46	SD 22	YES	Richard Polanco (termed out in 2002)
LOST	Havice (D-Cerritos)	YES	AD 56	US House of Representatives	YES	No incumbent
LOST	Calderon (D-Montebello)	NO	AD 58	Insurance Commissioner	YES	Harry Low (retiring)
WON	Leonard (R-San Bernardino)	YES	AD 63	BOE 02	YES	Dean Andal (termed out in 2002)
WON	Hollingsworth (R-Murrieta)	NO	AD 66	SD 36	YES	Ray Haynes (termed out in 2002)
LOST	Zettel (R-Poway)	NO	AD 75	SD 36	YES	Ray Haynes (termed out in 2002)
WON	Monteith (R-Modesto)	YES	SD 12	US House of Representatives	NO	Gary Condit
WON	McPherson (R-Santa Cruz)*	NO	SD 15	Lieutenant Governor	NO	Cruz Bustamante
RUN-OFF	O'Connell (D-San Luis Obispo)	YES	SD 18	SPI	YES	Delaine Eastin (termed out in 2002)
WON	McClintock (R-Thousand Oaks)*	NO	SD 19	Controller	YES	Kathleen Connell (termed out in 2002)
WON	Ackerman (R-Irvine)*	NO	SD 33	Attorney General	NO	Bill Lockyer
WON	Haynes (R-Riverside)	YES	SD 36	AD 66	YES	Dennis Hollingsworth (running for SD 36)

* Retains current seat if campaign for new office is not successful.

Key: AD = Assembly District, SD = Senate District, BOE = Board of Equalization, SOS = Secretary of State, SPI = Superintendent of Public Instruction

PRIMARY ELECTION YIELDS MIXED RESULTS

The March 5 primary produced a number of interesting results. Because of the decennial redistricting that took effect this year, very few legislative seats will be seriously contested in November. Additionally, because term limits produced so many open seats in districts that will not be competitive between Democrats and Republicans, much of the real action in this election year was in the primaries.

In addition, the Assembly's "Democratic Moderate Caucus" (DMC) has demonstrated its ascendancy in determining the outcome of a number of hotly contested issues. Already in the 2001-2002 legislative session, these "pro-business" Democrats have either teamed with Republicans to stymie various measures favored by their more liberal Democratic colleagues (e.g., legislation relating to secret settlements) or have forced moderating amendments, particularly in consumer protection, arbitration, and privacy legislation.

A number of interests (trial lawyers, environmentalists and labor unions) who felt thwarted by the DMC's influence were unusually active in supporting candidates in last Tuesday's Democratic primaries. There is wide discrepancy in the press accounts of how successful they were in those efforts. The impact probably won't be known until the 2003 session when the new legislators take office. To whatever extent the change in membership affects legislative deliberations, any legislation that is passed must still be signed by the Governor to become effective.

Ideology played a role in some Republican primaries as well, most obviously the gubernatorial primary where political neophyte Bill Simon came from well behind to defeat former Los Angeles mayor Richard Riordan. At the legislative level, two Republican assembly members were unsuccessful in their quest for higher office where a prime issue in their races was their vote for the state budget last year. Those budget votes were portrayed as expedient abandonment of the Republican caucus position in return for district enhancements.

Besides the ideological tussles, a number of other interesting themes emerged. A few examples:

Relatives - One brother (Democrat Ron Calderon) and one spouse (Republican Sharon Runner who defeated incumbent Phil Wyman) won primaries as did

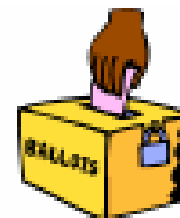
Democrat Loni Hancock, wife of former Assembly Member Tom Bates.

Comebacks - Former Lieutenant Governor Mervyn Dymally won a Democratic Assembly primary while former Assembly members Rusty Areias and Denise Ducheny won Democratic Senate primaries. Former Republican Assembly Member Peter Frusetta lost his bid for the Senate. John Garamendi captured the Democratic primary in his bid to return to the office of Insurance Commissioner while March Fong Eu unsuccessfully sought to once again become Secretary of State.

Constitutional Office - A number of legislators ran for constitutional offices: Senator Bruce McPherson won the Republican primary for Lieutenant Governor, Assembly Member Kevin Shelley won the Democratic primary for Secretary of State, Senator Jack O'Connell will be in a run-off for the nonpartisan Superintendent of Public Education position, Senator Tom McClintock won the Republican primary for State Controller, Senator Dick Ackerman won the Republican primary for Attorney General, Assembly Members Carole Migden and Bill Leonard won primaries for Board of Equalization seats 1 and 2, respectively. Assembly Member Lynne Leach was unsuccessful in her race for Superintendent of Public Instruction as was Assembly Member Tom Calderon in his effort to win the Democratic primary for Insurance Commissioner.

Return to Los Angeles - The result of Assembly Member Tony Cardenas' campaign for a seat on the Los Angeles City Council is still unknown with a large number of absentee and provisional ballots to be counted. Previous recent attempts by legislators (Tom Hayden, David Roberti, Antonio Villaraigosa, Carl Washington, Scott Wildman) to win local office in Los Angeles were also unsuccessful.

A surprising number of incumbent District Attorneys were either defeated (six or seven, depending on absentee ballot count) or will face run-off elections (four) in the Fall. Seven DA's were re-elected.



For a complete list of election results please visit the Secretary of State's website at www.ss.ca.gov.



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SPEAKER NAMES NEW COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Newly elected Assembly Speaker Herb Wesson (D-Culver City) has named new chairs for several Assembly committees. One of these, the Committee on Judiciary, hears bills directly impacting the courts. Assembly Member Ellen Corbett (D-San Leandro) is now the chair. Ms. Corbett was elected to the Assembly in 1998. Prior to joining the Assembly, she served eight years on the San Leandro City Council, including four years as mayor.

Ms. Corbett replaces Assembly Member Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) who is the new chair of the Appropriations Committee. This committee hears all bills that have a fiscal impact. Mr. Steinberg was elected to the Assembly in 1998 and previ-

ously served on the Sacramento City Council.

Another key chair assignment is on the Assembly Budget Committee, where Jenny Oropeza (D-Long Beach) takes over for Tony Cardenas (D-Sylmar). Ms. Oropeza was elected to the Assembly in 2000. Prior to that, she was a member of the Long Beach City Council.

Assembly Member Joe Nation (D-San Rafael) has been designated as the chair of the Rules Committee and will assume that position in the future. The Rules Committee is responsible for assigning bills to appropriate policy committees.

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