



Los Angeles Area
Chamber of Commerce

TUESDAY | Oct. 11, 2005

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

Prop. 77 Makes Elections Fair



Coming up at the Chamber

[View all upcoming events on our web calendar.](#)

WED | Oct. 12
70th Annual Construction Industry Awards
[more info](#)

FRI | Oct. 14
Mastering Media II: Advanced Communications
[more info](#)

TUE | Oct. 18
Transportation & Goods Movement Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

THU | Oct. 20
Environmental Quality Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

MON & TUE | Oct. 24 & 25
2005 Golf Classic
[more info](#)

TUE | Oct. 25
Referral Network
A Growing Companies program sponsored by Wells Fargo
[more info](#)

WED & THU | Oct. 26 & 27
2005 Cash for College: College and Career Convention
[more info](#)

THU | Oct. 27
Economic Development & Land Use Committee
[more info](#)

FRI | Oct. 28
Mastering Media III: Marketing Your Event
[more info](#)

WED | Nov. 2
Health Care Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

WED | Nov. 2
One Global California: Connecting You to the World
[more info](#)

THU | Nov. 3
Leadership L.A. Graduation and Scholarship Fundraiser
[more info](#)

FRI | Nov. 4
Education & Workforce Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

FRI | Nov. 4
Accenture's Pancakes & Politics with LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer
[more info](#)

TUE | Nov. 8
Referral Network
A Growing Companies program sponsored by Wells Fargo
[more info](#)

WED | Nov. 9
5th Annual Westside Mixer
[more info](#)

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, with more than 1,400 members, is the voice of business in L.A. County. Founded in 1888, the Chamber

Democracy is an interesting thing. It is a concept that embodies the voice of the people being heard and counted in the halls of government. Politicians say they are all for it, yet they don't always act like it. A case in point is the way they draw legislative district boundaries.

Since California's acceptance into the Union in 1850, the political boundaries for state legislators and our members of Congress have been drawn by politicians and, nowadays, by their political consultants. This is a blatant conflict of interest that protects incumbency by providing politicians with districts that are often irregular and irrational.

Prop. 77 finally gives Californians an opportunity to reclaim our democracy. It *must* be passed.

Here is what Prop. 77 does: A bipartisan panel of three retired judges will be assigned the task of drawing the legislative boundaries. Their proposal will be submitted directly to the voters for approval, thereby bypassing the legislators and their consultants.

What will this accomplish? Plenty!

For starters, Prop. 77 will get the legislators' attention. Prop. 77 is really a referendum on the state legislature, a body that accomplished little this year. Previous displays of bipartisanship, such as last year's workers' comp reform, are apparently a thing of the past.

Prop. 77 will also guarantee that voters are placed in districts because they have something in common with each other, not because legislators have something in common with them. Communities of interest, city and county boundaries and other elements will be what is considered, rather than drawing districts to re-elect incumbents. That is our job and our right to choose whether to do so.

In last year's elections, 153 state legislative and Congressional seats were at stake – and not one changed party! That is because the parties worked it out that way when they last redrew the districts. Only one of those races (Assembly District 35 in Santa Barbara) came within five percentage points in the final tally.

Is this democracy?

The other reason to support Prop. 77 is to produce more centrists in Sacramento, ones who are not necessarily wed to a strictly partisan ideology and can work with others on solving problems as opposed to promoting gridlock.

The theory behind judges drawing the legislative boundaries (as was done in 1992) is that they will be immune from the political pressures of ambitious officeholders and their hired guns trying to influence the redistricting process.

Will each district become a swing seat? Hardly. The best estimates are that 10-12 seats will become competitive, and not all of those will produce centrist legislators.

But it is worth the exercise. The scarcity of centrists in Congress and the legislature is so pronounced, that--with a few exceptions--there is no longer a bridge between Democrats and Republicans, at least in Sacramento. This must explain why the legislature continues to poll worse than every governor since polling began. We may not like the governor, but we can at least run a competitive race to replace him/her. That is not the case with the legislature, at least with the way political boundaries are now drawn.

And for those Democrats (with a capital D) who argue that they won't support Prop. 77-type reforms until similar reforms are adopted in Republican states, I say that we should lead the nation in promoting reform, not wait for others. It is wrong when Texas Republicans gerrymander their Democratic officeholders out of office, just as it is wrong that Democrats in California want to protect the status quo. But we should not use other states' misguided politics to be an excuse to do it the same way.

Prop. 77 is not a partisan issue. It's an issue of fairness and an issue of democracy.

I hope you will join me in voting for Prop. 77.

And that's *The Business Perspective*.

The Business Perspective is an award-winning weekly opinion column by Rusty Hammer, President & CEO, LA Area Chamber

L.A. Business THIS WEEK

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TALK BACK TO THE CHAMBER

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