



Place Redistricting Reform on the Ballot



Coming up at the Chamber

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TUE | Sept. 11
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TUE | Sept. 11
Los Angeles Regional Business Preparedness Summit
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TUE | Sept. 11
L.A. Export Series #1
Developing and Expanding Export Markets
[more info](#)

WED | Sept. 12
Los Angeles Regional Business Preparedness Summit
[more info](#)

WED | Sept. 12
Cash For College CDD Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon
[more info](#)

WED | Sept. 12
Aviation Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

FRI | Sept. 14
Health Care Committee Meeting
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The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business in L.A. County. Founded in 1888, the Chamber promotes a prosperous economy and quality of life in the Los Angeles region. For more information, visit www.lachamber.org

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Two efforts to improve state government are at play in Sacramento – a constitutional amendment to shift redistricting responsibility to an independent commission and a statewide ballot initiative to revise term limits. Taken together, they provide a significant, one-time opportunity to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the California Legislature.

Legislators now have the power to draw their own districts – essentially stacking the deck in their favor every 10 years. This is a blatant conflict of interest that has resulted in gerrymandered districts that stifle any real competition between candidates or ideas. The result is that in the last three election cycles with 459 separate races, only four seats switched party hands. This has perpetuated a system that protects incumbents and provides little incentive for lawmakers to consider voices from the political center – where the majority of Californians stand – and hurts all of us regardless of our political affiliation.

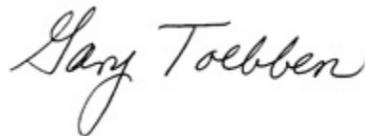
Term limits have done more harm than good for California. Under the current system, legislators may spend a maximum of six years in the State Assembly and eight years in the State Senate. These limits have created a revolving door of lawmakers who regularly move from Assembly to Senate or vice versa. The result is a body of elected officials who are unable to develop any real institutional knowledge before they move on. The unintended consequence is that the power and influence of special interests, unelected lobbyists and professional staff members has increased dramatically. And short term political victories often trump long term public policy planning.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is working with the Assembly and Senate to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot to shift redistricting responsibility away from politicians and into the hands of an independent commission. And Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez and State Sen. President pro Tem Don Perata will place a [term limit reform ballot initiative](#) on the February 2008 presidential primary ballot. If passed, their term limit reform would allow lawmakers to serve up to 12 years in either house.

When combined, this is a good package that will ensure greater electoral fairness, more competition of ideas, and legislation that reflects more long-term planning and experience. But extending term limits without redistricting reform will be regarded as self-serving and should not be embraced by the Legislature or the general public.

Citizens must make it clear to elected officials that they want a package of real change, not simply a revision in term limits. We urge the Legislature to work with the governor's office to make sure that redistricting reform makes its way to the February 2008 ballot and into the hands of voters. That action will inspire voter confidence rather than suspicion.

And that's *The Business Perspective*.



Gary L. Toebben
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Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

The Business Perspective is a weekly opinion piece by Gary Toebben, President & CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, produced with the input of Senior Policy Advisor Rusty Hammer.

by Gary Toebben, President & CEO, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

L.A. Business THIS WEEK

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