

**UC Berkeley**  
**California Journal of Politics and Policy**

**Title**

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**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8h0006vq>

**Journal**

California Journal of Politics and Policy, 2(2)

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**Publication Date**

2010-02-03

**DOI**

10.5070/P2BC8Z

Peer reviewed

## A Constitutional Convention Won't Produce the Reforms California Needs

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While constitutional reform is essential for addressing the dysfunctionality that characterizes California government, it probably cannot be accomplished by means of a convention. Why? Because the same forces that have created the current problems would be in a position to make sure their interests are protected in the convention process.

A better approach is to amend the constitution through a series of voter initiatives, the approach that California Forward has embraced. This approach stands a better chance of targeting strategic reforms, while at the same time mitigating the influence of special interests.

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Among the many reforms needed, two of the most important would be (1) to increase the *capacity* of the legislature to make wise decisions, and (2) to create a *decision-making process* that would allow wise choices on the part of individual legislators to translate into collective action by the legislature.

### **Legislative Capacity**

There was a time when chairs of legislative policy committees were selected because of their expertise in the subject matter—an expertise flowing from many years of dealing with the complex issues that came before the committees. Term limits effectively eliminated that expertise. Freshman legislators may now find themselves chairing

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policy committees during their first year in the legislature. Simply put, legislators today do not have the experience and subject matter knowledge necessary to make wise decisions about matters that come before them in committee. Today, because of term limits, lobbyists more often have that knowledge and expertise. They use it to pursue the special interests they represent, and their influence has grown due to term limits. *The interests of California residents collectively would be greatly enhanced by the elimination of term limits.*

### **Decision-Making Process**

Assuming individual legislators had sufficient knowledge and experience to make wise decisions, their ability to do so is constrained by a requirement for a super majority vote to enact a state budget. The state budget is the most important expression of state policies and priorities. But a minority of the legislature has the power to prevent the will of the public from being enacted into law. We live in a representative democracy in which each person's vote is supposed to be equal to any other's. *State budgets should require only a simple majority vote so that our representative democracy can be truly representative.*