

California Needs to Overhaul Its Leadership, Not Its Constitution

Gabriella Holt*
Citizens for California Reform

Recently, there has been much debate on the necessity of California holding a constitutional convention as a way to end the dysfunction in Sacramento. While I agree there is much need for change in how we approach governing our state, I do not think a constitutional convention is the right path.

Although the government reform areas, presented by constitutional convention advocates, require modern day review, the system will continue to fail because the reform proposals fail to address the type of people we elect as our state representatives.

Copyright © 2010 The Berkeley Electronic Press. All rights reserved.
www.bepress.com/cjpp

The purpose of the state constitution is to guide our government and to set parameters, within which we the people can operate, protecting life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is up to the people to govern by electing their representatives and holding them accountable.

Californians need to address the type of people elected to lead our state. Failing to address this core issue is equivalent to moving the deck chairs on the Titanic. No matter what reforms we put in place—things will fail to change because we will continue to elect people who are more focused on their next job in politics rather than doing what is in the best interest of our state.

Due to gerrymandered districts, a small percentage of highly partisan primary voters determine the make up of the highly partisan legislature. Thus, the very make up of the legislature is fundamentally flawed. For this reason, the people recently passed redistricting reform, and that is

*Gabriella Holt is president and CEO of Citizens for California Reform.

why an open primary and a citizen legislature are critical to the future of our state. An open primary system would open the Capitol's doors to less extreme representatives and change a polarized political climate that often paralyzes the legislature.

A citizen legislature that limits the time the legislature meets for regular session in Sacramento will eliminate professional politicians who currently hold all levels of power. Citizen legislators, part-time lawmakers who work and live among the people they represent, will be the ones making the decisions.

Once the legislature has a more balanced representative membership, it can redirect its efforts to set the direction of the state through its policies and laws, streamline the bureaucracy, and pass on time, balanced budgets. The governor can then manage the affairs of the state and execute the legislative direction.

A complete overhaul through a constitutional convention will not solve California's problems.

California needs an overhaul of its leadership beginning with the California State Legislature.