



SENATORIS EST CIVITATIS LIBERTATEM TUERI.

1:26

Welcome to the
California State
Senate Chamber

*The
California Senate*



Welcome to the California State Senate

The forty Members of the Senate of California welcome you to the State Capitol, and hope that your trip will include an opportunity to view the Legislature in session. If so, you will have an opportunity to observe the formal debate and voting which constitutes the popular notion of what the lawmaking process is all about.

It is important to understand that only a part of the Legislature's work takes place in the Senate and Assembly Chambers. Most of the real negotiation and discussion occur in the meetings of the standing committees. Each committee is assigned an area of jurisdiction such as public safety, transportation, or housing. The committee staff are policy experts within their jurisdiction. Try to spend a few minutes in a committee room watching these public hearings. It is there the public participates, and our laws are actually drafted.

Senators are also kept busy the year round with continual study of new ideas for improving the laws by which all of us are governed.

As California's population and wealth have grown, so has the complexity of its problems. Good government today requires much more information and analysis than in the past. A good law is born in a hard-fought atmosphere of give and take, after long weeks, months, or even years of detailed scrutiny, close debate, and painful redrafting. While it is important that government be efficient, it is paramount that the laws of the state be fair and effective. And that takes careful work.

Understanding the legislative process is important to every person in California. For that reason, this pamphlet has been prepared in an effort to make your visit more meaningful.

SINCERELY,

YOUR STATE SENATOR



The Seal of the Senate

The Senate Seal is round in shape, and its border bears the phrase “Seal of the Senate of the State of California.” The center features a quill pen placed diagonally across an open scroll. On the top of the scroll is inscribed “LEGIS” (of the law) and the Roman numeral MDCCCL, designating 1850, the year California was admitted to the Union. Surrounding the pen and scroll is a cluster of California live oak leaves and acorns.

The Senate Seal is used on documents and letters that deal specifically with Senate business.

The Senate adopted the seal in 1967 following a design contest. The Senate selected the seal above, which was designed by Miss Linda Taylor, a student at California State University, Sacramento.



California Indian Seal

Artist Robert Freeman, a Luiseño Indian born on the Rincón Indian Reservation in San Diego County, designed this circular bronze seal. The California Indian Seal commemorates the contributions, history, and continuing sovereignty of generations of California Indians. Indian people lived throughout what is now California when the first Spanish settlement was founded in 1769. At that time more than 100 different Native American languages were in use, with at least as many cultural forms of religion and custom. The names of 68 California Indian tribes inscribed along the border represent the historically significant linguistic and regional tribes in California.

An Indian woman, with infant and child, symbolizes the importance of family unity and cultural continuity. A basket, an oak tree, a dancer holding wands, and a man wearing a flicker quill headdress and a clamshell necklace reflect diverse aspects of Indian culture. Two figures journeying by boat represent coastal Indian tribes. Three military jets, arcing towards the top of the seal, portray the military experiences that many Indians have in common.



Spanish-Mexican Seal

Artists Donna Billick and Susan Shelton, who were born in Mexico City, designed this circular bronze seal.

The Spanish-Mexican Seal commemorates the contributions and history of Spanish-Mexican California. From the first Spanish settlement in 1769 until 1848, when Mexico transferred California to the United States, the Spanish presence and Mexican influence flourished. The symbols on the seal portray the dynamic Spanish and Mexican traditions that continue in California today. A Spaniard's profile and the frontal view of an indigenous person are depicted in the center of the seal. A third face emerges when the viewer's eye combines the images. This central image contains the meaning of the entire seal as it captures the melding of the cultures.

The other images in the seal follow the first encounter of the two cultures and chronicle the ensuing transformations. The three rings around the central figure contain powerful symbols and icons representing the Spanish, Mexican, and Spanish-Mexican-Californian periods.

literature compliments of the California Department of State Parks



Composition of the Senate

The number of Senators is set by the State Constitution at forty, exactly half the size of the State Assembly.

Each Senator represents 988,086 people (2020 census).

Members of the Senate are elected to four-year terms, with those representing odd-numbered districts running for office during presidential election years and their colleagues from even-numbered districts standing for election at the same time as California's constitutional officers. Senators are limited to three terms, totaling twelve years.

*THE BIENNIAL SESSION

The Constitution specifies that the Legislature must convene in Regular Session at noon on the first Monday of December in every even-numbered year, and is automatically adjourned on November 30 of the following even-numbered year. The Legislature is one of the three branches of government, the others being the Executive, and the Judicial. Its primary responsibility is to write the laws of the State of California. It is also responsible for drafting the state's plan for public spending. Each year, before January 11, the Governor must submit a proposed State Budget for consideration by the Senate and Assembly. The Budget Bill is to be enacted by both houses by midnight on the following June 15. In an emergency, the Governor may, by proclamation, cause the Legislature to convene in an Extraordinary Session. Legislators can then act only upon those subjects specified in the proclamation. No bill can become law unless passed by both the Senate and Assembly. If the Governor vetoes a bill it is dead, unless two-thirds of the members in each house vote to override the veto. The Senate has an additional responsibility which the Assembly does not share. It is responsible for the confirmation of hundreds of the officials nominated by the Governor for service in the executive branch. This procedure gives the Senate an extra "check and balance" in the way the Legislature's laws are enforced.

* Adopted by the people at a General Election on November 7, 1972 (Assembly Constitutional Amendment No. 95, Resolution Chapter 81 – Statutes of 1972 (Proposition 4)).



More than a century and a half has passed since the first State Senate was convened in an adobe hotel at Pueblo de San José on December 15, 1849.

The present State Capitol at Sacramento was begun in 1860, first occupied by the Legislature in 1869, and completed in 1874. It was closed for safety reasons in 1976 and underwent extensive renovation and restoration.

This project, completed in 1982, included returning the Senate Chamber to as near its original 19th-century appearance as possible.



THE SENATE RULES COMMITTEE

left to right: Senator Eloise Gómez Reyes, Senator Brian W. Jones, Senate President pro Tempore Monique Limón (Chair), Senator Shannon Grove (Vice Chair), and Senator John Laird

ORGANIZATION

The Constitution designates the Lieutenant Governor as President of the Senate, following the federal model the Vice President of the United States sets. Actual leadership of the State Senate is vested in the President pro Tempore, who is chosen by fellow Senators. The President pro Tempore also serves as chair of the Rules Committee, which is elected from the Senate membership on the first day of the legislative session.

The Rules Committee assigns bills to committees and does the internal administrative work of the Senate.

There are two officers of the Senate who are elected by the Members but who themselves are not Senators: the Secretary of the Senate and the Sergeant-at-Arms.

The Secretary is the chief parliamentarian and keeper of the legislative records, responsible for the accurate drafting of bills and their preparation for presentation to the Governor. The Secretary is also the Executive Officer of the Senate, in charge of the day-to-day administration of the house.

The Senate Sergeants-at-Arms possess a unique working knowledge of the procedures and traditions of the California Senate and Legislature. Sergeants are assigned to security posts during full sessions of the Senate. Their duties include maintenance of decorum, assistance to members and the visiting public, distribution of bills and analyses, and operation of the sound system. Each Sergeant must be able to recognize important officials as well as staff, media personnel and lobbyists, to determine who may or may not be permitted in the Chamber.

The Senate makes extensive use of computers in most areas of its operation. Laptop PCs are installed on each Senator's desk in the Senate Chamber.

Available on these personal computers are automatic displays of the Senate Floor Analyses, full text of all bills on the Daily File, and voting information.



SENATE PUBLICATIONS

Visitors to the Senate will notice the people working at the long desk facing the Senate Floor. These are attachés of the Senate who run its "Desk." Acting under the direction of the Secretary of the Senate, they compile:

The Senate Daily Journal, the official record of each day's proceedings;

The Senate Weekly History with daily supplements, is an up-to-date reference showing the current status of each piece of Senate legislation;

The Senate Daily File, the agenda or schedule of the day's business, together with public notice of bills set for committee hearings;

Every two years, the Office of the Secretary of the Senate publishes the *Legislative Handbook*, a pocket reference containing the Rules of the two houses, together with pictures and biographies of the Members and other information of daily use to the Legislature.

Two other publications indispensable to the Legislature:

The Legislative Index, prepared by the Legislative Counsel, is a subject matter index of all measures, along with a table of the sections of law to be affected;

The Analysis of the Budget Bill, prepared by the Legislative Analyst, is a detailed critique of the Administration's proposed budget.

Copies of these and other publications are available in the Legislative Bill Room, which is located in the basement of the Capitol.



Senator Monique Limón, President pro Tempore

IT IS THE DUTY OF THE SENATORS TO PROTECT THE LIBERTY OF THE PEOPLE

Heshani Wijemanne
Chief Assistant Secretary of the Senate

Erika Contreras Valles
Secretary of the Senate

Elaine Morgan
Assistant to Secretary of the Senate

Mathew Burns
Assistant Secretary

Cabaldon
of
Yolo

McNerney
of
Pleasanton

Durazo
of
Los Angeles

Richardson
of
San Pedro

Caballero
of
Merced

Allen
of
Santa Monica

Cervantes
of
Riverside

Rubio
of
Baldwin Park

Weber Pierson
of
San Diego

Blakespear
of
Encinitas

Gonzalez
of
Long Beach

Wiener
of
San Francisco

Laird
of
Santa Cruz

Padilla
of
San Diego

Grayson
of
Concord

Wahab
of
Hayward

Cortese
of
San Jose

Archuleta
of
Pico Rivera

Ashby
of
Sacramento

Reyes
of
San Bernardino

Sr. Michelle Gorman, RSM, Senate Chaplain



The Senate televises and live streams unedited coverage of floor sessions, committee hearings, and Capitol press conferences for viewing around the state. In addition to live coverage and streaming of the Senate's proceedings, a media archive is accessible through the Senate website at SEN.CA.GOV.



The Committee Structure

Senate committees are established by the Rules Committee early in each legislative session. Since it is impossible to discuss at length the merits of every bill on the Senate Floor, committees play the crucial role of assuring that each detail of proposed legislation is given a thorough hearing. In Committee, members decide whether or not a bill should be sent to the Floor for final consideration by the whole Senate.

Senators actually spend most of their Capitol time in Committee. They devote long irregular hours, often working nights and holidays, hearing witnesses and debating each bill, from general policy to the finest details of punctuation.

Members are assigned to their committee tasks based primarily upon the interests of the individual Senators. Although no one Senator can be an experts in all fields, through training and inclination they are highly knowledgeable in certain areas. All effort is made to assure that each Senator is assigned to committees of their choice.

Each committee is served by the competent and impartial technical analysis of its staff consultants. It may also seek the legal assistance of the Legislative Counsel, or by special in-depth analysis by the expert consultants of the Senate Office of Research.

Committee hearings are open to the public and the press. All votes and other actions taken in committees are recorded and published.



There is a gallery in the rear and along the sides overlooking the Senate Chamber. From the gallery the public is welcome to observe the proceedings of the Senate. Only Members, officers of the Senate, and individuals who have been granted special permission may go on the floor of the Chamber while the Senate is in Session.

SENATORIS
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LIBERTATEUM TUERI

Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, President

Zach Twilla
History Clerk

Claudia Fuentes
Daily File Clerk

Madison Hinojosa
Assistant Daily File Clerk

Lewis McCarty
Journal Clerk

Frank Silva
Assistant History Clerk

Niello
of
Fair Oaks

Ochoa Begh
of
Yucaipa

Hurtado
of
Bakersfield

Becker
of
Menlo Park

Smallwood-Cuevas
of
Los Angeles

Stern
of
Los Angeles

Alvarado-Gil
of
Jackson

Strickland
of
Huntington Beach

Choi
of
Irvine

Grove
of
Bakersfield

Pérez
of
Pasadena

Menjivar
of
San Fernando Valley

Valladares
of
Santa Clarita

Jones
of
San Diego

Seyarto
of
Murrieta

Dahle
of
Bieber

Arreguin
of
Oakland

Umberg
of
Santa Ana

Ashby
of
Sacramento

Reyes
of
San Bernardino

McGuire
of
Healdsburg

Limón
of
Santa Barbara

Katrina Rodriguez, Sergeant-at-Arms



BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

During the course of their daily sessions, the Senators may consider a variety of legislative matters. These measures fall into five categories:

The first and most important are known as bills. These propose new laws, or amend or repeal existing laws. Bills can be introduced in either the Senate or Assembly and must be “read” three times in each house and voted upon. Most bills require 21 votes, a majority of the Senate, to pass. However, those bills requiring an expenditure of state revenues, or dealing with urgent matters, must obtain 27 votes, two-thirds of the Senate. If a bill is passed by both houses, it is sent to the Governor for approval or veto. Bills enacted by October 15th of each year take effect the following January 1st. Urgency bills take effect immediately upon their enactment.

Falling into the second group are resolutions, the most important of these being constitutional amendments, which require a two-thirds vote in each house for adoption and must then be submitted to the public for ratification at primary or general elections.

Concurrent resolutions relate to general matters of concern to both the Senate and Assembly. They must be adopted by both houses to have effect.

Joint resolutions notify the federal government of the opinion of the Legislature on matters of public interest. They are also used to ratify amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Individual house resolutions relate to matters of particular concern to one house. They are adopted by that one house only.



RULES AND REGULATIONS

To insure decorum, fairness, and order in their deliberations, the Senate is bound by Article IV of the Constitution of California. It is further governed by Standing Rules (covering the details of daily procedure), and Joint Rules (covering procedures for transactions between Senate and Assembly).

When these rules are silent on a particular point of parliamentary law the Senate is guided by *Mason's Manual*. This manual was compiled by a former Assistant Secretary of the Senate who achieved nationwide recognition as a parliamentarian and constitutional authority.

A Senator who wants to speak must raise the microphone at his or her desk. The presiding officer will ask, “Senator Doe, for what purpose do you rise?” The Senator may then proceed on the matter under consideration, usually speaking for as long as he or she wishes.

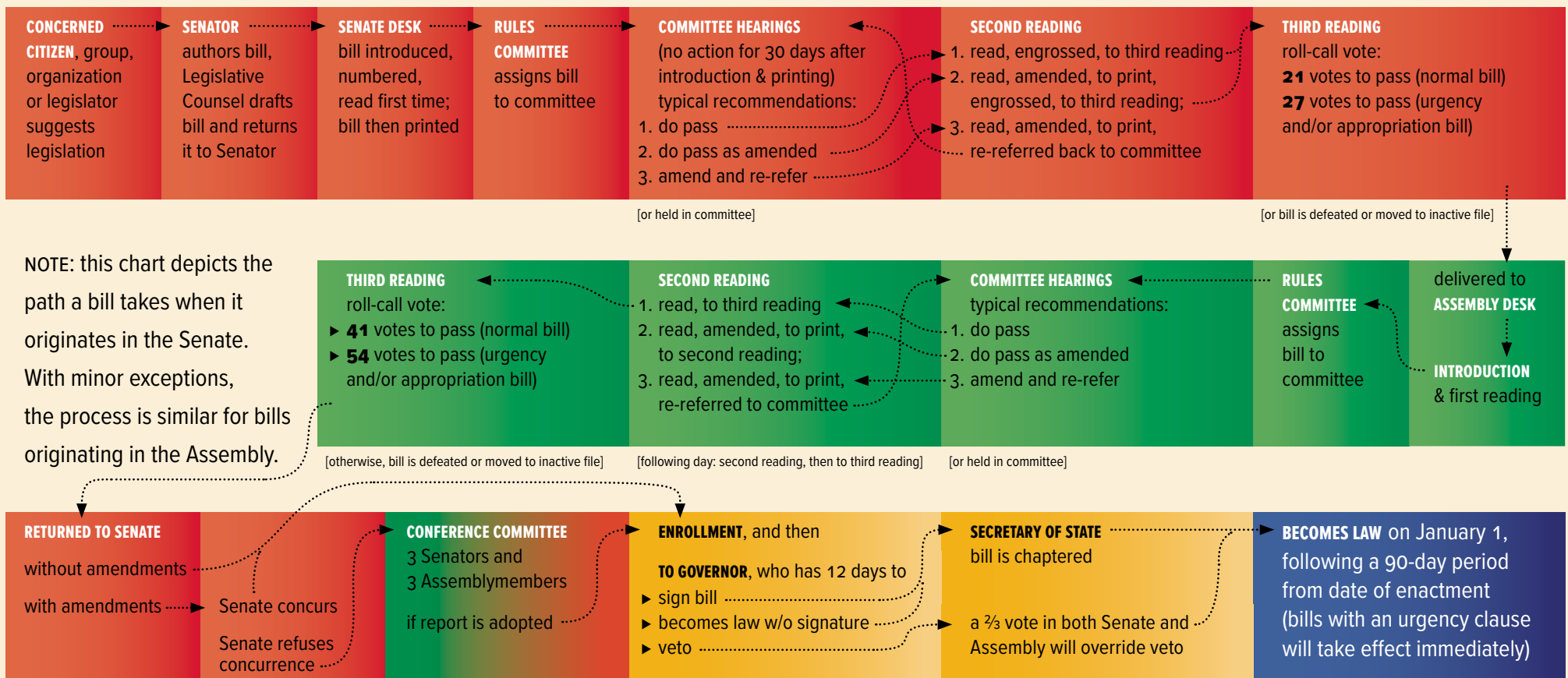
When all members who are interested in a bill have given their arguments, pro and con, the author asks for a vote, and the roll is called. Should the bill fail to receive the votes necessary for passage, and a number of members are absent from their seats, a “Call of the Senate” may be moved. At that time the Sergeant-at-Arms is directed to lock the chamber doors and bring in all absentee members. Upon their arrival, the “Call of the Senate” is lifted and the roll completed.

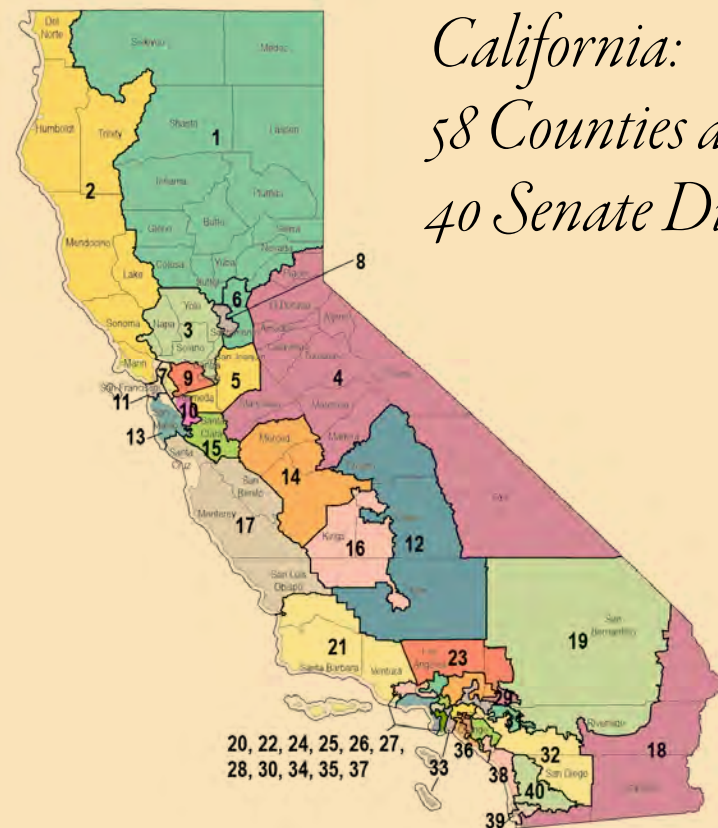
A Senate rollcall is taken by voice vote. As the Secretary calls each name, that member answers “AYE” or “NO.” After being tallied and announced, these votes are published in the *Senate Journal*. This tradition of casting votes orally shows the respect Senators hold for the important act of making a law.



HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW IN CALIFORNIA

A BILL'S PATH THROUGH THE CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE





*California:
58 Counties and
40 Senate Districts*

Legislative Clerks

As part of the responsibilities of the office of the Secretary of the Senate, Legislative Clerks assist with proofreading amendments that cross the Senate Desk. Amendments are an alteration made, or proposed to be made in a bill or resolution, by adding, changing, substituting, or omitting language. The purpose of amending is to allow Members of the Legislature to make changes to their introduced measures in order to meet the changing and diverse needs of their constituents.

Engrossing & Enrolling Clerks

As part of the Secretary of the Senate's office, the Senate Engrossing and Enrolling Clerks, utilize procedures to ensure the accuracy of all Senate Legislation. The clerk, to guarantee the integrity of all original Senate measures, maintains the custody of these documents except in the regular course of business of the Senate. Upon final passage by both houses, the Engrossing and Enrolling Clerk enrolls and transmits this legislation to the Governor and the Secretary of State, respectively. The final procedure of this office takes legal precedence over all other records of the Senate. To accomplish this responsibility, the Engrossing and Enrolling Clerk supervises a staff of one Chief Assistant Engrossing and Enrolling Clerk and six Assistant Engrossing and Enrolling Clerks.

SENATE DISTRICTS

Names in CAPITALS denote counties which are wholly contained within the boundaries of the district.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 BUTTE, COLUSA, GLENN, LASSEN, MODOC, Nevada, Placer, PLUMAS, SHASTA, SIERRA, SISKIYOU, SUTTER, TEHAMA, YUBA | 18 IMPERIAL, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego |
| 2 DEL NORTE, HUMBOLDT, LAKE, MARIN, MENDOCINO, San Francisco, Sonoma, TRINITY | 19 Riverside, San Bernardino |
| 3 Contra Costa, NAPA, Sacramento, SOLANO, Sonoma, YOLO | 20 Los Angeles |
| 4 ALPINE, AMADOR, CALAVERAS, EL DORADO, INYO, Madera, MARIPOSA, Merced, MONO, Nevada, Placer, STANISLAUS, TUOLUMNE | 21 San Luis Obispo, SANTA BARBARA, Ventura |
| 5 Alameda, SAN JOAQUIN | 22 Los Angeles, San Bernardino |
| 6 Placer, Sacramento | 23 Los Angeles, San Bernardino |
| 7 Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco | 24 Los Angeles |
| 8 Sacramento | 25 Los Angeles, San Bernardino |
| 9 Alameda, Contra Costa | 26 Los Angeles |
| 10 Alameda, Santa Clara | 27 Los Angeles, Ventura |
| 11 SAN FRANCISCO, San Mateo | 28 Los Angeles |
| 12 Fresno, Kern, Tulare | 29 San Bernardino |
| 13 San Mateo, Santa Clara | 30 Los Angeles, Orange |
| 14 Fresno, Madera, Merced, Tulare | 31 Riverside, San Bernardino |
| 15 Santa Clara | 32 Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego |
| 16 Fresno, Kern, KINGS, Tulare | 33 Los Angeles |
| 17 MONTEREY, SAN BENITO, San Luis Obispo, SANTA CRUZ | 34 Los Angeles, Orange |
| | 35 Los Angeles |
| | 36 Los Angeles, Orange |
| | 37 Orange |
| | 38 Orange, San Diego |
| | 39 San Diego |
| | 40 San Diego |



THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA was adopted by the Constitutional Convention of 1849. It depicts the Roman goddess of wisdom, Minerva, who has at her feet a grizzly bear and clusters of grapes representing wildlife and agricultural richness. A miner works his claim with the Golden Gate in the background. The Greek motto *Eureka* — “I have found it” — refers to both the miner’s discovery of gold and the expected entrance of California as a state of the Union. Near the upper edge of the seal are 31 stars representing the total number of states in the Union after California’s admission in 1850.

This stained glass version of the Great Seal of California is mounted in the corridor ceiling just outside the doors of the Senate Chamber.



revised under the direction of
Erika Contreras Valles, Secretary of the Senate
by
Heshani Wijemanne, Chief Assistant Secretary of the Senate,
Mathew Burns, Assistant Secretary of the Senate,
and Frank Silva, Assistant History Clerk/Reading Clerk

2025-26 SESSION