

NO ON THE RECALL

Progressive political leaders in the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s, especially at the state level, pushed for political reforms to allow voters to have more of a say in the democratic process. Prominent among the Progressives was Sacramento-born Hiram Johnson, who was elected governor of California in 1910, with the backing of the Lincoln-Roosevelt League. He was known as a corruption fighter.

Two years later, in 1912, he was the Progressive Party nominee for Vice President and was on the ticket with the Progressive nominee for President, Theodore Roosevelt. The Roosevelt-Johnson ticket lost to the Democratic Party ticket of Woodrow Wilson and Thomas Marshall.

Johnson was the first elected governor of California to serve two consecutive four-year terms. In 1916, he was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served from 1917 until his death in 1945. Johnson's policy positions were complex. As a U.S. Senator, he supported the Immigration Act of 1924, which severely restricted immigration to the United States from East Asia, and Southern and Eastern Europe.

So, what's the big deal about Hiram Johnson, aside from the Progressive label, and having a high school named after him in Sacramento? It was under Johnson's leadership that the California Constitution was amended to grant women the right to vote (the sixth state to do so), to provide a pathway for voters to legislate via the ballot initiative process and for voters to have the ability to recall the governor and other elected officials.

So the recall process has been on the books in California for a little more than a century. Eighteen other states have some provision in their constitution to recall a governor. According to the California Secretary of State's office, there have been 55 attempts to place a gubernatorial recall election on the ballot in California, but only two of those attempts successfully got on the ballot, even though the bar to qualify is relatively low for required valid petition signatures of registered voters.

Recall Attempt No. 1

Gov. Gray Davis, an aide to Gov. Jerry Brown during Brown's first stint as governor, was finishing his first term as governor. Gov. Davis, a centrist Democrat, was beset with problems, real or imaginary—many of which were started under the previous governor's eight years of service: conservative Republican Pete Wilson.

There were power shortages and rolling blackouts due to the shenanigans of Enron. There was a scandal regarding campaign contributions to Davis from a software company called Oracle, which had just received a lucrative contract from the state. Republicans were also miffed at Davis for being against the 1994 Proposition 187, passed by the voters, that, if implemented, would have denied undocumented persons state services (a federal judge declared it unconstitutional).

Nonetheless, Gov. Davis won a second term in 2002, defeating Republican Bill Simon. Then, in 2003, California voters, by a margin of 55% to 45%, voted yes to the question: "Should Gov. Gray Davis be recalled as California Governor?" In answer to the second question, "Who should replace Gov. Davis?," a plurality of the votes—48%—went to actor Arnold Schwarzenegger (who declared his candidacy on the *Tonight Show* with Jay Leno), with Dinuba-born Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante finishing second, with 31% of the vote.

The field of candidates included child actor Gary Coleman, porn star Mary Carey, pornographer Larry Flynt, publisher Ariana Huffington, dozens of assorted unknowns and about 20 write-in candidates. It was sort of like the bar scene in the first *Star Wars* movie. Only in California.

Recall Attempt No. 2

The second recall will occur on Sept. 14. According to the California Labor Federation, the effort to recall Gov. Gavin Newsom is a vicious, well-funded attack mounted by anti-worker, anti-union monied interests, corporate cronies and Trump allies.

As of July 21, according to the California Secretary of State's Office, among the 46 certified candidates on the ballot are Republicans John Cox, Kevin Faulconer, Leo S. Zacky (name sound familiar?) and Caitlyn Jenner, as well as entertainer Angelyne (no party preference, born Ronia Tamar Goldberg).

We know the right hates Newsom. We know the far left is still grumbling over the November 2020 incident at the French Laundry Restaurant in Napa. It wasn't a good look, to be sure. Gov. Newsom apologized. No one is without faults.

The worst thing Democrats can do now is to be complacent and splintered. Democrats absolutely must be united and not take Gov. Newsom's leadership for granted, especially during the last 18 months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Remember: Because we were the first state to lock down, under Gov. Newsom's leadership, countless lives were saved. Democrats must be united, show up and vote "No" on this gubernatorial recall. We do not wish to even consider the second question on the recall ballot.

REDISTRICTING

The redistricting process is slowly getting started at all levels of elected governance in California. Much of the delay is due to a hangover from the Trump administration, which toyed with the content of Census questions and placed undue fear in the minds of undocumented people, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which challenged the usual Census work.

At the state level, the 14-member independent California Citizens Redistricting Commission has at least two dozen virtual/public meetings scheduled for citizen input between now and mid-September. Due to the 2020 Census delay, the final decision on the adoption of boundaries for California's Congressional and state legislative districts could be delayed until early January 2022, which will obviously shorten the campaign time frame for candidates, given that the Primary election is scheduled for June 7, 2022. For more information, visit www.wedrawthelinesca.org.

Locally, counties have started meetings for citizen input on redistricting for Board of Supervisors districts. In Fresno County, a meeting for public input in District 4 was held in Riverdale on July 14. Additional meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Aug. 3: District 1, Gaston Middle School
- Aug. 4: District 3, Fresno High School
- Aug. 12: Commission hearing for public input from all districts, Fresno County Health and Wellness Center
- Aug. 21: District 2, Bullard High School
- Aug. 21: District 5, Clovis Veterans Memorial Center

For more information, visit www.co.fresno.ca.us/resources/redistricting/calendar.

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