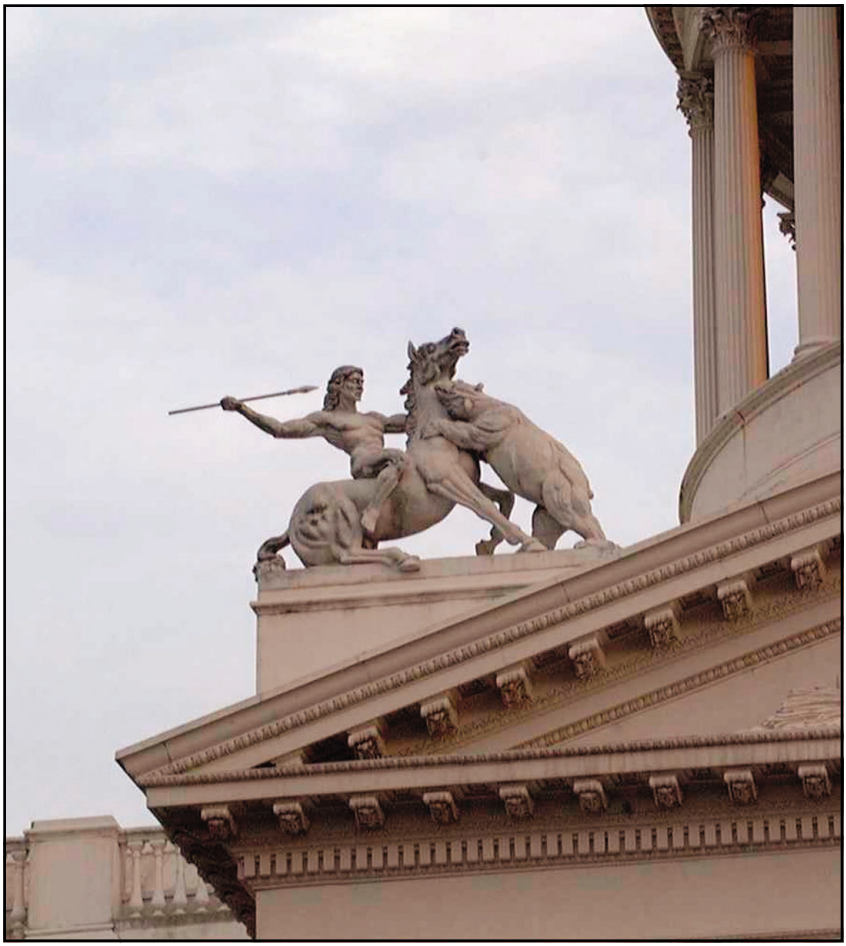
CALIFORNIA
STATE ASSEMBLY



Your Legislature

"Government is a cooperative effort in which all citizens must take part to the full extent of their ability. If it is otherwise, the citizens will one day discover they are being ruled."

Welcome to the California's State Capitol—the people's house. There is no better place to learn about our government than a visit to our State Capitol.

This booklet is designed to give you a brief overview of the Legislature, its members, and the Capitol you have built for conducting the public's business. No matter how confusing the legislative process may seem at first glance, be confident it is still possible for individual citizens to have an impact on what happens here.

On your visit to the Capitol, be sure to drop by the office of your representative to make him or her aware of your visit. You may have the opportunity to view the Legislature in session from the galleries on the third floor, or to watch one of the committees consider new legislation. A copy of the Daily File, which can be obtained from the Bill Room in the basement, will provide a list of legislative activities for that day.

When you return home, you can stay informed. Sessions of the Assembly and many of its committees are broadcast on many local cable television stations. The Assembly's site on the World Wide Web, http://www.assembly.ca.gov, provides the history, text and analysis of every bill, a schedule of legislative activities, press releases, committee memberships, and other information on Assembly Members, including their biographies. If you prefer to receive information in a more traditional way, you can contact your legislator either here in the Capitol or in the district where you live.

This State Capitol and this government belongs to you and your fellow Californians. The 120 Members of the California Legislature hope you enjoy your visit and will come back again soon.

The California Legislature

The Members

The California Legislature is composed of an Assembly and a Senate, consisting of 80 and 40 Members, respectively. Members of the Assembly are elected for two-year terms, while Senators are elected for four-year terms, with one-half of the membership elected every two years. Prior to their election, the Members of the Legislature must be over 18 years of age, United States citizens, inhabitants of California for three years, and of the district which they represent for one year.

Assembly and Senate districts are apportioned on the basis of population. Out of 32 million Californians, each Member of the Assembly represents approximately 400,000 people, and each Senator represents approximately 800,000 people. Elections for the Assembly and Senate are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years.

Assembly Districts

Senate Districts in Black

The presiding officer of the Assembly is the Speaker, who is elected for a two-year term by a majority vote of the Members. The Speaker is charged with the overall management and supervision of the Assembly. In this capacity, the Speaker has general direction of the Assembly Chamber, Members' offices, staff offices and the Assembly committee meeting rooms. In addition to being the elected leader of the Assembly, the Speaker also acts as the spokesperson for his or her party.

The Speaker pro Tempore and Assistant Speaker pro Tempore, who are appointed by the Speaker, exercise the powers and the duties of the Speaker during his or her absence, including presiding over the regular meetings of the full Assembly.

To assist him or her in the performance of his or her duties, the Speaker appoints a personal representative on the floor, who is known as the Majority Floor Leader. He or she assists the Speaker in the conduct of the business of the Assembly by making the appropriate motions and points of order that are necessary to expedite the proceedings of the House.

A Minority Floor Leader is designated by a caucus of the Minority Members, and acts as their representative on the Floor of the Assembly.

In addition to the above officers, the Assembly elects three officers who are not Members of the Assembly: a Chief Clerk, a Sergeant at Arms and a Chaplain.

The Senate is organized in a similar manner with the exception that, as provided by the Constitution, the Lieutenant Governor rather than a Member of the Senate serves as President of the Senate. He or she presides over the sessions of that body. The Senate does, however, elect a President pro Tempore from its own membership who acts as the presiding officer of the Senate in the absence of the Lieutenant Governor. The Senate majority and minority caucuses select their respective Floor Leaders. The Senate also elects a Secretary and a Sergeant at Arms, who are not Members of the Senate.

Photo by Herb Lingl, San Francisco

Rules Committees

The business affairs of each house are conducted by a Rules Committee.

In the Assembly, the committee consists of the chairperson, who is a Member selected by the Speaker, and seven other Members, four selected by the Speaker and three selected by the Minority Leader, including the Vice Chairperson. One alternate Member of the Committee on Rules is selected by each party leader.

An important function of the committee is the initial assignment of bills to the appropriate standing committees. The Rules Committee also provides clerical assistance and offices for the Assembly Members and approves the expenditures of other committees.

In the Senate, the President pro Tempore serves as the Chairperson of the Senate Rules Committee, while the other four Members are elected by the Senate. The Speaker of the Assembly has the same powers as the Senate Rules Committee to appoint the chairmen and chairwomen of the standing committees and also to appoint the committee members.

In many state legislatures the rules committees perform only "housekeeping" functions. In California, the Rules Committees may consider substantive legislation in the same manner as do the policy committees in the California Legislature.

The Committee System

With the volume of legislation that is introduced and considered, it is impossible for each Member of the Legislature to review in detail all of the changes and additions in existing law that are proposed. Any such proposal is embodied in what is called a "bill." It is expected that the Legislature will consider, along with a great number of other legislative measures, approximately 6,500 bills during the current two-year session. In order to cope with the multitude of bills and the variety of subject matter introduced, a system of policy committees has been established. The committees, each varying greatly in size and scope, may best be described as the basic working units of the Legislature.

In appointing Members to committees, every effort is made to give importance to their previous experience and training. This makes it possible for the Legislature to consider in depth the numerous bills which are presented each session. The number and subject of the committees change from time to time to reflect the current areas of concern to the state.

Following a bill's introduction in the House, it is referred by the Rules Committee to a committee where it may be scheduled for hearing. The hearing is the point at which the general public and interested parties are invited to testify in support or opposition to the bill. It is here, at the committee hearing, that many of the important policy questions are resolved.

Some bills require hearings by more than one committee, in which case a committee or the House may re-refer the bill to another committee. For example, bills with monetary implications must be re-referred to the appropriate fiscal committee in each House. When testimony is completed, the policy or fiscal committee makes its decision on the proposed legislation and reports its recommendation to the House.

A bill may be amended at various times as it moves through the process. The bill must be reprinted each time an amendment is adopted by either House. All bill actions are printed in the DAILY FILES, JOURNALS and HISTORIES and are also available on the Internet.

If a bill is amended in the opposite House, it is returned to the House of Origin for concurrence in amendments. If the House of Origin does not concur, a Conference Committee Report or new amendments must then be adopted by each House before the bill can be sent to the Governor.

Sessions of the Legislature

As a result of a Constitutional Amendment adopted by the people in 1972, the California Legislature now meets in a continuous two-year session, convening on the first Monday in December of even-numbered years. Previously, the Legislature met in sessions of indeterminate length not to exceed one year. The present biennial session permits more extended and thorough study of the complex problems facing the state. It also eliminates the necessity of reintroducing and reprinting in the second year those bills which were not acted upon or were refused passage during the first year of the biennial session.

In addition, the Governor may, by proclamation, call the Legislature into session to consider and act upon specified subjects. Such sessions are known as extraordinary or special sessions. On these occasions the Legislature is limited to the consideration of the matters specified in the Governor's Proclamation.

Bills enacted by October 2 of a given year become effective on January 1 of the following year. Tax measures and bills that are necessary for the

preservation of the public peace, health or safety, which are called urgency measures, take effect immediately upon being signed by the Governor. Bills enacted at extraordinary sessions become effective 91 days after the adjournment of that session.

In January 1982, the Legislature returned to the permanent Assembly and Senate Chambers, which were renovated as part of the overall reconstruction of the old Capitol building. For six years prior, the Assembly and Senate met in temporary quarters that were constructed at the east end of the Capitol Annex. In remodeling, the Assembly and Senate Chambers were restored to a turn-of-the-century motif. At the front of each chamber is a rostrum from which the Speaker of the Assembly and the Lieutenant Governor or the President pro Tempore of the Senate preside. Prominent in each of the chambers are elegant chandeliers which hang over the central aisle. The reconstruction project has provided California with one of the truly picturesque Capitol buildings in the United States.

At the opening of each day's session, bills are introduced, read the first time and referred to the various committees. When the committees report the bills back to the House, they are placed on the Daily File, which is the agenda for the legislative day, and read a second time. The Constitution requires that the bills be read for the third time on a subsequent day. It is at this third reading that Floor debate on the measure takes place. If the bill is passed, it is sent to the other House, where it follows a similar procedure. If the second House also approves, it is then sent to the Governor for his or her signature or veto.

The Assembly uses a computerized voting system. By pressing a red or green button at their desks, the Members record their votes "Yes" or "No." The votes are displayed on two large panels on the wall at the front of the Chamber. These panels list the Member by name and indicate how the Member has voted. A green light indicates a "Yes" vote; a red light indicates a "No" vote. After every Member who wishes to vote has voted, the total is

automatically tabulated, exhibited on the front panels and recorded on a ballot at the rostrum. A majority vote (41) of the elected Members will pass all but specified tax levies, urgency and general fund appropriation bills or proposed constitutional amendments, all of which require a two-thirds vote (54).

In 1994, at the request of the California Assembly, the Legislative Data Center developed an automated Floor system to enhance access to legislative information for Assembly Members during Assembly Floor sessions.

The "Assembly Floor System" provides touch screen capability on a laptop computer. The system displays Daily File information online as bills are taken up on the Floor providing access to bill information (e.g., analysis, bill text, votes); and searches and displays additional bill information currently available in the Legislative Inquiry System.

In the Senate, voting is done by voice roll call. It requires 21 votes to pass a regular bill and 27 to pass all other measures.

Televising the Assembly

To bring state government closer to the citizens of California, the State Assembly has instituted the televising of Assembly proceedings. Live, unedited, gavel-to-gavel coverage of Assembly sessions and committee hearings is now available to California homes via cable TV.

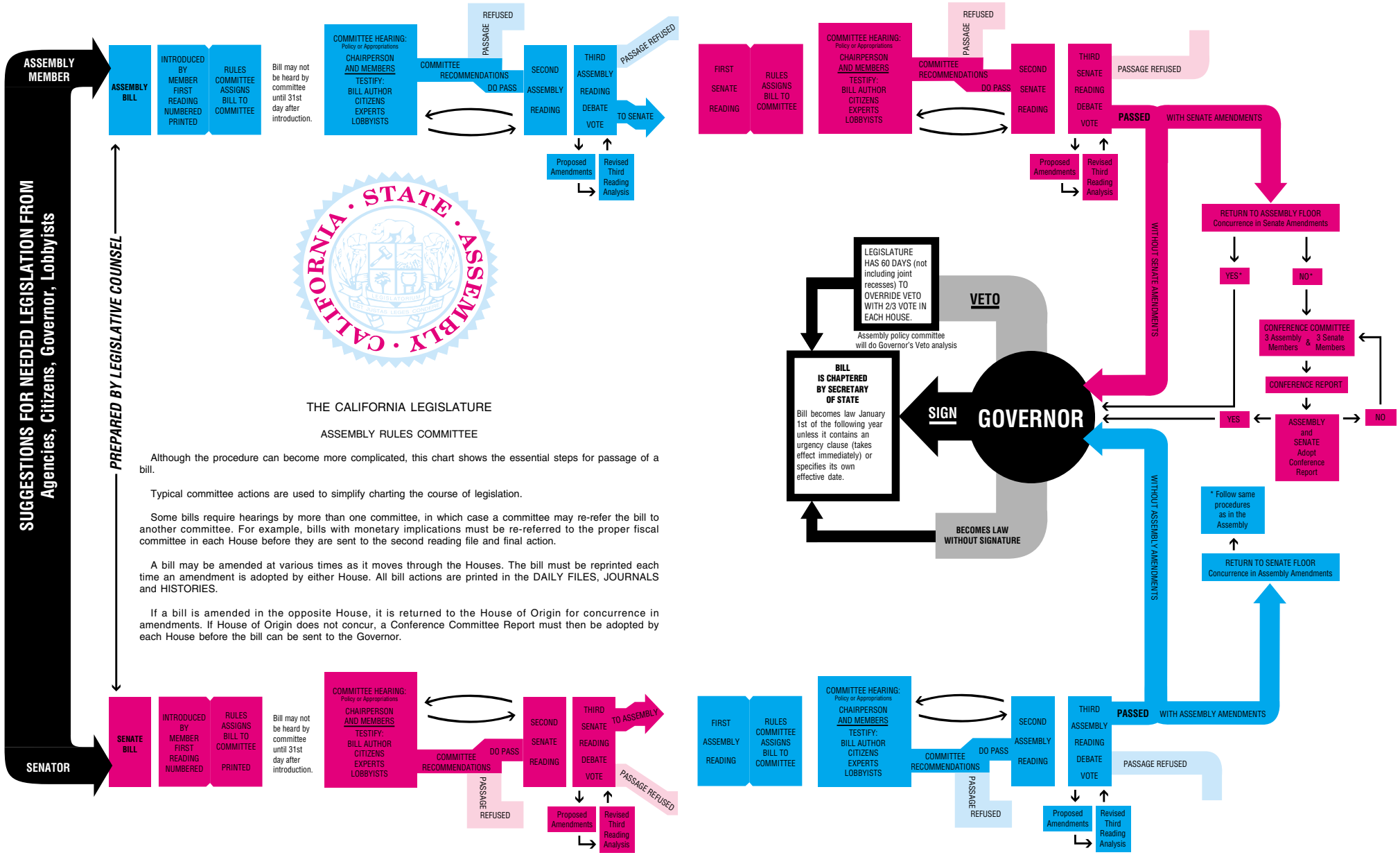
Policy oversight of televising Assembly proceedings is governed by the Assembly Committee on Rules. The committee has made the television signals available to any bona fide news organization or educational institution. Coverage of Assembly sessions is used for local news broadcasts as well as instructional programs.

ASSEMBLY
CHAMBERS

California State Assembly

2001-02 Session

THE LIFE CYCLE OF LEGISLATION — From Idea into Law



THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

ASSEMBLY RULES COMMITTEE

Although the procedure can become more complicated, this chart shows the essential steps for passage of a bill.

Typical committee actions are used to simplify charting the course of legislation.

Some bills require hearings by more than one committee, in which case a committee may re-refer the bill to another committee. For example, bills with monetary implications must be re-referred to the proper fiscal committee in each House before they are sent to the second reading file and final action.

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If a bill is amended in the opposite House, it is returned to the House of Origin for concurrence in amendments. If House of Origin does not concur, a Conference Committee Report must then be adopted by each House before the bill can be sent to the Governor.

California Capitols

Shortly after the end of Mexican rule, Californians began to clamor for statehood. In 1849, a constitutional convention met at Colton Hall in Monterey and proposed a constitution, subsequently ratified by the people, which named San Jose as the first capital.

In December 1849, the first Legislature convened in a two-story adobe hotel in San Jose. The city was composed of little more than huts, tents and clapboard buildings, and the general discomfort did little to endear the city to the legislators.

In 1851 a generous offer from General Vallejo induced the legislators to move the capital to Vallejo where a frame building had been erected for their use. Since housing was virtually nonexistent, many of the Members managed to secure lodging on the steamer *Empire,* which remained moored at a wharf during the session.

Confusion and inconvenience again brought stormy cries for relocation. After convening in Vallejo in 1852, the Legislature moved to Sacramento to finish the legislative session.

In 1853, the Legislature returned to Vallejo only to find conditions as inhospitable as before. To an exasperated membership, an offer from the community of Benicia for the use of its new city hall proved irresistible, and a bill was passed moving the seat of government to that city, where the legislative session finished.

While the legislative quarters were adequate, it became increasingly evident that Benicia itself was too small to serve as the capital city. With this in mind, the Legislature determined that Sacramento would be the state's capital and moved from Benicia in February 1854.

Sacramento offered its courthouse for immediate use and a building site for the permanent Capitol. Shortly after the close of the Session of 1854, the courthouse was razed by fire, but a new one was completed in time for the next session.

The new courthouse continued to serve as the home of the Legislature until 1869. This tenure was interrupted only once; during the winter of 1861–62 a severe flood prompted removal of the Legislature to the Exchange Building in San Francisco.

Construction on the permanent Capitol was begun in 1860, and, though not completed until 1874, the Legislature was able to occupy its Chambers in 1869. Except for a major "modernization" in 1908, the Capitol remained virtually unchanged until 1949 when additional space requirements resulted in the construction of the Capitol Annex. Completed in 1951, the Annex attaches to the east side of the old Capitol and houses legislative offices, committee rooms and the Governor's offices.

In 1976, a total reconstruction of the building was undertaken to strengthen and reinforce the weakening structure. This monumental project was completed in January 1982, and the old Capitol, restored to its turn-of-the-century decor, was again occupied by the Legislature and opened to the public.

The State Capitol, Sacramento

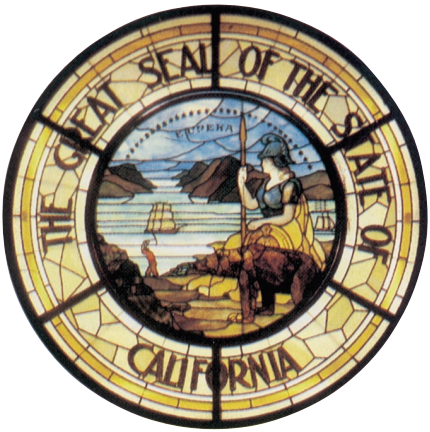
California State Capitol Park

Capitol Park, consisting of 40 acres surrounding the Capitol building, provides visitors with a display of one of the finest collections of trees representing the continents and climates of the world. Hundreds of species of trees grow in the park including cedars, pines, eucalyptus, cypress, fir and redwood. In addition to the unique collection of trees, the park offers smaller groves which showcase camellias, roses and varieties of cactus representing the California desert. Situated amid the foliage and flowers are many memorials dedicated by the people of California to the memory of, among others, peace officers, early California Native Americans and those who fought in the Vietnam War. Trees and remembrance are combined in scenic "Memorial Grove," consisting of saplings transplanted from southern Civil War battlefields in memory of the fallen.

Photo by State Capitol Museum

State Seal

The Great Seal of the State of California was adopted by the Constitutional Convention of 1849. The Roman Goddess of Wisdom, Minerva, has at her feet a grizzly bear and clusters of grapes representing wildlife and agricultural richness. A miner works near the busy Sacramento River, below the Sierra Nevada peaks. The Greek motto "Eureka" (I have found it) probably refers to either the miner's discovery of gold or the expected entrance of California as a state of the Union. Near the upper edge of the seal are 31 stars representing the number of states with California's anticipated admission in 1850. The stained glass replica of the Seal depicted here is embedded in the ceiling of the second floor of the State Capitol in Sacramento.



Bear Flag

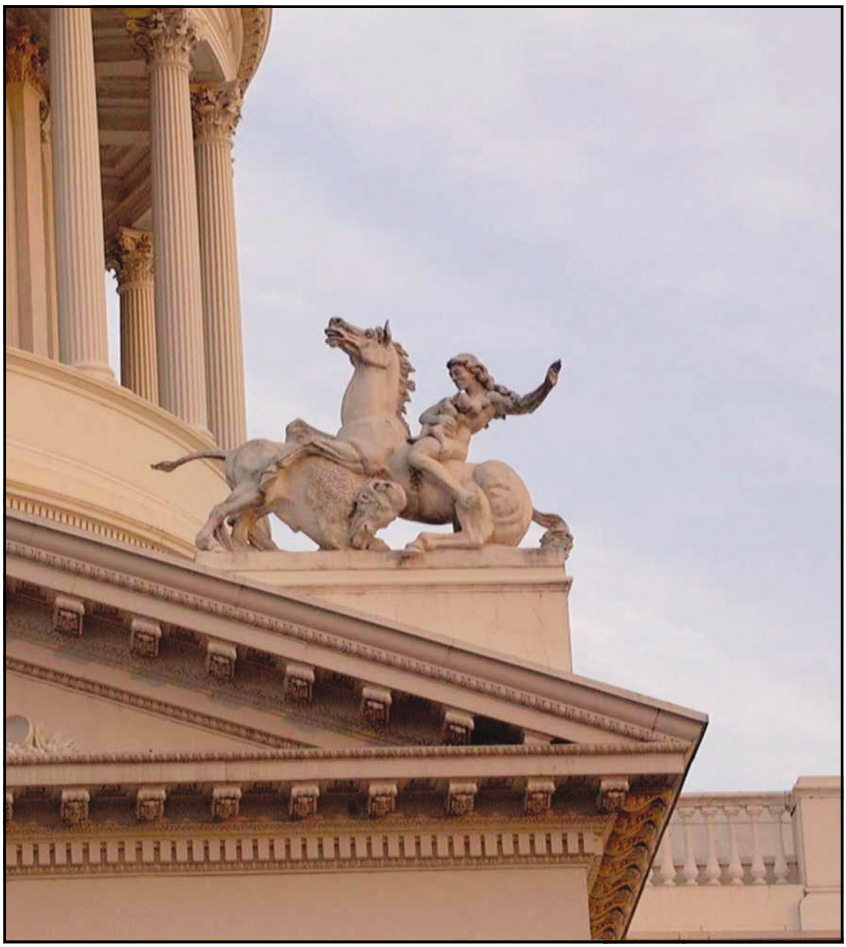
The Bear Flag was adopted by the 1911 State Legislature as the State Flag of California. It is patterned after the historic flag raised at Sonoma on June 14, 1846 by a group of American settlers in revolt against Mexican rule. The flag was designed by William Todd on a piece of new unbleached cotton. The star imitated the lone star of Texas. A grizzly bear represented the many bears seen in the state. The words "California Republic" were placed beneath the star and bear. The Bear Flag was replaced on July 9, 1846, by the American Flag. The original flag was destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906.

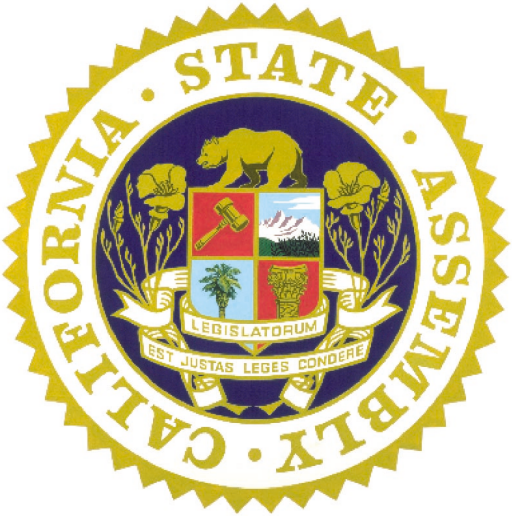
State Flower

The Golden Poppy was selected as the official State Flower of California by the 1903 State Legislature. Also sometimes known as "The Flame Flower," "La Amapola," and "Copa de Oro" (Cup of Gold), it grows wild throughout the state.

State Tree

The California Redwood was designated as the official State Tree of California by the 1937 State Legislature. Common in the geologic past throughout much of the northern hemisphere, it is now found only on the Pacific Coast. Many groves and stands of the towering trees are preserved in state and national parks and forests. There are two species. The Sierra Redwood is found in the Sierra Nevada mountain region. The Coast Redwood grows in the mountains and valleys along the central and northern coast of California and the southern coastal edge of Oregon. The Coast Redwood is the tallest known tree in the world, reaching heights in excess of 360 feet in California's Humboldt County. The Sierra Redwood is the world's most massive tree, with trunk diameters occasionally reaching 35 feet.





The Seal of the Assembly of the State of California

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