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We explore the impact of term limits on power in the California legislature. Using campaign contributions to legislators as an indicator of individual power, we compare the relative influence of caucus leaders, committee chairs and rank-and-file legislators. We also compare a sample of committee chairs in the Assembly and Senate. The results indicate that term limits diffuse power in both chambers, but in different ways. In the Assembly, the caucus leadership loses power relative to other members. In the Senate, however, caucus leaders gain power at the expense of committee chairs. Finally, the changing proportion of institutional contributions in both chambers demonstrates a shift in power to the upper chamber, a finding that suggests the impact of term limits is attenuated in a bicameral system.

There have been many predictions about the effect of term limits but empirical studies are few because the first class of termed out legislators is only recently completed. California offers an excellent opportunity to explore the implications of term limits since this state was among the first, along with Oklahoma and Colorado, to initiate a term limit regime in 1990 and the first wave of term limited legislators has since departed. In this paper we explore how term limits produce changes in relative power among subgroups of legislators.

Earlier analyses of the effect of term limits relied on information taken from electoral contexts other than American state legislatures (Carey 1996; Taylor 1992), or made extrapolations using pre-term limit electoral data (Moncrief et al. 1992; Opheim 1994). These studies focus on the effect of term limits on the composition of the legislature or behavior of officeholders. In this paper we look at how term limits may alter the institutional balance of power. The most recent empirical study on institutional effects suggests that term limitations re-distribute power away from the legislature and toward external institutional actors, such as interest groups, the governor and bureaucracy (Carey et al. 1998). Here, we are interested in the internal dynamics of the legislature, namely, whether power shifts from one subset of legislators to another.

Using interest group campaign contributions to legislators as a measure of individual power,¹ we explore whether influence in the California legislature is drifting downward, away from caucus leaders and committee chairs toward rank-and-file members, and whether power in a bicameral system shifts toward one chamber. Our

¹ We owe a debt to Stephen Ansolabehere and James Snyder for this insight. In a forthcoming paper, they demonstrate that interest group money goes to members of institutions according to their power rather than

underlying assumption is that the flow of campaign contributions is a reasonable measure of influence in the legislature. Based on comparisons of campaign contributions to incumbents in the 1986 and 1996 legislatures we find that influence is decentralized in both legislative chambers -- though in slightly different ways -- and that power has tilted to the upper chamber.

Term Limits in California

In November 1990, Californians approved Proposition 140, limiting legislative service in the Assembly to six years (three terms) and Senate to eight years (two terms). In a professional legislature such as California's, term limits were expected to have a significant impact on political careers. In the 1989-90 session, fully 75 percent of the Assembly and 60 percent of the Senate exceeded the respective limits imposed by Prop 140 (Capell 1996). To put it another way, 77 out of 120 legislators had served longer than a term-limited career when this new policy was introduced. What was less clear at the time was how term limits would alter the internal dynamics of the institution.

Term limits were introduced into California primarily as a means of abolishing legislative careerism. By the mid-eighties, the mean tenure of Assembly members was 4.5 terms (Clucas 1995), rising steadily since the 1940s when members averaged 2.5 terms. This longevity was, in part, a result of the reforms introduced in the early 1960s to turn part-time lawmakers into professionals. The new laws raised salaries, increased staff and other support services. In effect, these changes created a new incentive structure for legislators. They no longer needed to be tied to jobs or professions outside the legislature

according to the demand for money. They find that interest group contributions are inelastic while individual contributions are elastic (i.e., the latter increase with demand, while the former do not).

and they could consider taking up legislative work as a career. The overall impact of member longevity on the legislature was to make the institution stronger and more independent, especially in relation to the executive branch.

Traditionally, power within each legislative chamber differs in several important ways. In the Assembly, power is strongly centralized under the Speaker. Speaker Willie Brown (1980 - 1995) and his predecessors controlled members through their authority to make committee assignments, allocate internal operating funds, and handpick members of the all-important Rules Committee. In the past, loyalties to the Speaker were forged primarily through a seniority system that rewarded patience with plum committee assignments, district pork and campaign funds. In the smaller Senate, by contrast, power is decentralized among committee chairs and vice-chairs. The Speaker Pro-Tempore lacks the formal powers to reward and punish committee chairs as in the Assembly, and his ability to act unilaterally in this smaller chamber is tempered by a deferential culture, much like the U.S. Senate (Muir 1982).

The first goal of this paper is to explore whether the power dynamics within each legislative chamber have changed. Are the caucus leaders, which include the Speaker in the Assembly and the President Pro-Tempore in the Senate, as powerful under term limits as before? Do committee chairs, particularly in the Senate, retain their traditional power? These questions address issues related to the internal operations of each chamber and seek to identify loci of control, which in turn, may explain degrees of efficiency and effectiveness within the organization.

The second goal is to see if the balance of power has changed between the Assembly and the Senate. Does the upper chamber gain influence under a term limit

regime because it becomes the repository of legislative experience through increasing migration of former Assembly members to the Senate? If a primary goal of term limit proponents was to create a citizen legislature, we might ask whether these policies produced parallel effects in each chamber. Careerism may not be curtailed through term limits but merely reconstituted so that the ambitious move more quickly from one house to another. In this way, term limits may have succeeded in creating a citizen legislature in one house but not the other.

Theory and Hypotheses:

Theories about interest group contribution strategies can help us evaluate the impact of term limits on institutional power in a legislature. We begin with the basic premise that interest groups want to affect policy through their campaign contributions.² To maximize their use of resources interest groups seek out and contribute to legislators who have the most influence (Ansolabehere and Snyder, forthcoming; Snyder 1990).³ On the other hand, individual donors may contribute because they are friends and family of the candidate, and they expect favors in return. In our study of the California legislature, however, we find that more than 80% of contributions to incumbents in our sample come from institutions rather than individuals.⁴ For this reason, we believe overall contributions to legislators largely reflect institutional giving, and therefore provide an important indicator of power within the institution.

² Contribution patterns of interest groups may reflect multiple strategies (access, goodwill, partisanship, etc.), but we share the view of Sorauf (1992) who argues: “In the last analysis, all PAC strategies come down to a single goal of affecting the outcomes of public policy in one way or another.”

³ We believe this pattern to be particularly true of non-ideological groups.

⁴ In our next version of this paper, we intend to separate political parties from this institutional category because parties often have different motives in contributing to candidates, such as maximizing the number of party seats in the legislature.

We use these insights about contribution patterns to evaluate the effect of term limits on the relative power of members in a legislature. We expect campaign contributions to reflect, in part, the influence of legislators and their ability to control policy. In a highly institutionalized legislature such as California, caucus leaders should receive the most contributions, then committee chairs, and lastly rank-and-file. In the Assembly, however, contributions will be weighted heavily toward the Speaker and other caucus leaders who have more control over the legislative agenda than counterparts in the Senate.⁵ In other words, the Assembly caucus leaders should receive several times more contributions than other members of the Assembly as compared with the difference between Senate caucus leaders and other members of the Senate.

At the committee level, Senate committee leaders should fare better than their counterparts in the Assembly. The committee chairs and vice-chairs in the Senate have more power over policy in their domain than counterparts in the Assembly where power is centralized under the Speaker. Therefore the difference in campaign receipts between Senate committee leaders versus rank-and-file should be greater than the difference between Assembly committee leaders and rank-and-file.

The influence of caucus leaders and committee chairs rests on at least three mutually reinforcing conditions: formal rules, seniority and experience. The formal rules of a legislature define the mechanisms leaders may use to reward and punish other members. In the Assembly, the rules give the Speaker considerable leverage over all other members. Committee chairs in both chambers may take advantage of rules that allow them to control the policy agenda of the committee, (e.g., establishing the order

⁵ In our study, Assembly caucus leaders include the Speaker, Speaker Pro Tempore, Majority Floor Leader, and Minority Floor Leader. In the Senate, they include the President pro Tempore, Democratic Floor

voting on bills, delaying bills, etc.).⁶ The power of committee chairs also depends on the degree of decentralization in the chamber. In highly specialized legislatures, committees often perform the detailed policy work that shapes legislation. The reforms introduced in the 1960s that provided incentives for members to pursue careers in the legislature probably furthered committee specialization and autonomy in ways described by Polsby (1968) in his study of the U.S. House of Representatives.

A seniority system that assigns rank based on longevity buttresses the formal authority of leaders because it clearly circumscribes the incentive structure for career advancement. Under the seniority system, a legislator who is patient, adopts organizational norms, and plays by the rules is rewarded later on in her career by the leadership.⁷ A legislator who ignores these norms is shunned and usually ineffectual. And because seniority is usually the primary road to career advancement, legislators who become leaders acquire a third source of power, that is, experience.

Experience increases the informal authority of leaders through the accumulation of expertise and personal relationships. For instance, committee chairs build long-term relationships with representatives of interest groups affected by the committee's decisions (Capell 1996). These relationships expose them to valuable policy information and important personal ties that help build dominant coalitions necessary to pass policy. Leaders also learn through experience how to manage committees and get work done efficiently.

Leader and Republican Floor Leader.

⁶ Committee chairs in the California state legislature have much less authority than their counterparts in Congress. For instance, the former cannot “bury” bills they do not like as may happen in a congressional committee; all bills introduced in the state legislature must have a hearing.

⁷ December 9, 1998 interview with Assembly Minority Leader, Bill Leonard at the Institute of Governmental Studies, UC Berkeley.

Under a term limit regime, the conditions listed above are undermined. The formal rules that give power to leaders may remain the same, but rank and file members have fewer reasons to observe them and may even try to change the old rules. With lame duck status never more than two terms away for any leader, members have fewer incentives than in the past to show deference in hopes of earning political chits that might be cashed in several terms later.

More critically for committee chairs, their informal authority is weakened by a potential lack of experience in a policy domain. Indeed, a committee chair may have no greater experience or personal ties than a rank and file member since seniority has little weight in determining who leads the committee.⁸ The unfortunate combination of lame duck status and inexperience will make it difficult for chairs to manage their committees effectively or efficiently. Committees will less likely be repositories of policy expertise since turnover among members and staff will be high.⁹ Important decisions will be made elsewhere, either in the executive branch (governor's office or bureaucracy) or through an expert advisory body to the legislature or party leaders (staff, commissions, etc). In any case, the committee will become less of a locus of policy initiatives, and therefore committee leaders have less value to interest groups.

The weakening of caucus leaders and committee chairs will be reflected in the pattern of campaign contributions. Instead of working mainly through the caucus leader or chair, interest groups may take up what Elizabeth Capell (1996) calls a new "retail"

⁸ In the 1998 Assembly, for instance, 19 of 52 committee leadership positions (chairs and vice-chairs) were filled by freshmen. In the past, committee leadership posts filled by freshmen were rare. Source: *California Journal Roster* 1998.

⁹ Staff size and payroll is limited under Prop 140. But it is likely that staff turnover would be high anyway since staff tend to be loyal to members and will seek other employment once members leave, according to Assemblyman Robert Hertzberg in an interview December 19, 1998 at the Institute of Governmental Studies, UC Berkeley.

strategy that provides a wider distribution of resources to many members rather than the wholesale strategy that channels funds to leaders who deliver packaged votes. Interest groups may be forced to spend more resources to reach more members than in the past, as a way of forging the winning policy coalition that was formerly accomplished effectively by legislative leaders.

We expect changes in leadership influence, as reflected in campaign contributions, to occur in both legislative chambers. Caucus leaders and committee chairs in both houses will receive relatively fewer contributions under a term limits regime than in a pre-term limit regime. We expect committee chairs in the Senate to suffer the greatest power loss because they had relatively more autonomy in a pre-term limit regime than their counterparts in the Assembly.

At the same time these dynamics are occurring within each chamber, we believe power gravitates to the upper chamber because experience is flowing to the Senate. Under term limits, Assembly members are more likely to run for Senate, while Assembly members will likely come from outside the legislature. Of the 80 Assembly members in office in 1990 when term limits was adopted, 21 were subsequently elected to the Senate (Chi and Leatherby 1998). Only one Senator from the 1990 Senate was elected to the Assembly.¹⁰ The Senate, while losing some of its institutional stability, will still retain members with more experience than in the Assembly. Senate committee chairs may be less powerful, but the collective experience of members in the upper chamber sustains a high level of performance in legislative affairs relative to the Assembly.

¹⁰ This figure has not yet been confirmed.

The continuity of legislative experience in the Senate should make this body more influential than the Assembly. If so, this will be reflected by the pattern of institutional contributions to members in each chamber. As stated earlier, interest groups contribute to affect policy, while the contribution strategies of individuals may reflect a broader array of motives. For some candidates, a chief source of campaign money is friends and family who might not seek policy influence. We argue that the proportion of institutional contributions relative to individual contributions reflects the power of the legislator. The more she must rely on individual donors -- friends and family -- rather than institutional contributors the less power she has. We use this insight to assess whether legislators in the Senate are gaining power over legislators in the Assembly.

Based on the above theories, we generate the following hypotheses about the changes that occur when a legislature moves from a regime with unlimited terms to term limitations:

1. When a legislature moves to a term limit regime, the distribution of campaign funds will be spread more broadly across members than in a regime without term limits because the power of party leaders and committee chairs is diminished relative to rank-and-file members.
 - A. The most dramatic change in the lower chamber will be between caucus leaders and rank-and-file because power is traditionally concentrated in the Speaker.
 - B. The most dramatic change in the upper chamber will be between committee chairs and rank-and-file because chairs are traditionally powerful in the upper chamber.
- We also expect caucus leaders in the upper chamber to lose power relative to rank-and-file members.

2. When a legislature moves to a term limit regime, the proportion of institutional contributions relative to individual contributions will rise in the upper chamber and decrease in the lower chamber because power gravitates to the upper chamber as it becomes the main repository of political experience.

Research Design and Data

To see the effect of term limits we compare campaign receipts for three groups in both the Assembly and Senate for pre-and post-term limit years: 1) caucus leaders, 2) chairs and vice-chairs on “juice” committees, and 3) a residual category that includes rank-and-file members and chairs of non-juice committees. Our term “juice committee” refers to the common perception among insiders that these committees traditionally attract big campaign donations.¹¹ We created a residual category that included other committee chairs because almost every Senator occupies a chair or vice-chair in this 40-member chamber.

We expect caucus leaders who dominate the legislature to receive the most contributions. Next, we expect committee chairs (usually from the majority party) and vice-chairs (usually from the minority party) to receive more campaign contributions than rank-and-file. Under a term limit regime, however, the power of caucus leaders and committee chairs is reduced and interest groups have less incentive to concentrate resources in the hands of leadership.

We selected 1986 as our baseline year because at that time few suspected that California would adopt term limits in 1990. For this reason, behaviors in 1986 would not

¹¹ Our selection of committees was based on discussions with lobbyists and leaders of public interest groups, such as Common Cause, that tracked campaign contributions.

be affected by the foreknowledge that legislators would be forced out of office in the mid-nineties. We compare the pre-term limit 1986 cycle with the 1996 election cycle for both houses when we make internal chamber comparisons. For comparisons between chambers we used 1996 data for the Senate and 1998 data for the Assembly.

We initially chose 1996 cycle to compare the chambers, but we realized that the Assembly was in considerable partisan and organizational turmoil during the 1995-96 legislative session. In 1995, the departing Democratic Speaker helped install a renegade Republican to lead the Assembly at a time when Republicans had gained a bare majority (Weintraub 1995). The hand-picked Republican permitted the former Speaker considerable powers as a minority leader, and also arranged for committee chairs and resources to be parceled out evenly among Democrats and Republicans. We decided that the instability created by the leadership battle in 1995 was a special case. We chose instead to look at the 1998 cycle for Assembly members, at a time when Democrats were again firmly in control of the chamber and leaders returned to similar patterns of assigning committee seats by partisanship (Katches 1999).¹² Moreover, in 1998 all legislators from 1990 had been termed out; this was not true in 1996.

To make our data collection more manageable, we selected a sample of committee chairs and vice-chairs in both chambers (see Table 1) with reference to three criteria. First, we wanted to select “juice committees” – those that attract significant campaign donations. Second, to ensure that we could make comparisons across legislative chambers we picked committees that shared similar responsibilities. Finally, we chose committees whose jurisdictions remained relatively consistent between

¹² We might have also looked at the Senate in 1998 but the decision to collect data for the Senate was made before the 1998 elections were over, and these data were not available until very recently.

legislative reorganizations for the ten years between 1986 and 1996. We make comparisons within each legislative chamber for pre- and post-term limits, as well as comparisons across the two houses, Assembly and Senate.

Table 1. Sample Committees in Study

Assembly Committees	Senate Committees
Appropriations	Appropriations
Agriculture	Agriculture and Water Resources
Insurance	Insurance
Utilities and Commerce	Energy, Utilities and Communications
Health	Health and Human Services
Education	Education

The campaign finance data for this study were taken from three sources. For 1986 data we used summarized election finance reports compiled by the California Fair Political Practices Commission. Unfortunately, budget constraints in 1990 forced the agency to discontinue these reports, so for the 1996 data it was necessary to review and tabulate the individual campaign documents filed by candidates at the California Secretary of State’s Office. Using optical character recognition software and a multiple-page scanner, we scanned hard copy financial reports of selected committee chairs and vice chairs into spreadsheet databases. This process spared us from having to spend time doing manual transcription and minimized data entry errors often made when using archived hard copy reports.

The third source of information came from cumulative campaign finance statistics for the 1996 primary and general elections compiled by the Secretary of State’s Office and posted at its web site. Regrettably, the Secretary of State left out 6 months of the reporting period, between the beginning of the calendar year 1996 and the official start of

the general election on July 1, 1996. Thus, we cannot compare absolute figures for the entire legislature between 1986 and 1996, but this situation does not prevent us from observing how patterns changed between cycles for each chamber.

Results

Our results suggest that term limitations alter the power balance in legislatures in fundamental ways. In the 1986 Assembly, it is clear that caucus leaders controlled most of the political contributions (See Figure 1). These leaders averaged almost 9 times the amount of contributions as juice committee chairs and vice-chairs, and just over 7 times the amount of members in our residual category, which includes rank and file and other committee chairs. We expected vice-chair and chairs of juice committees to receive more contributions than members in the residual category but this is not the case at all. In fact, our sample of chairs actually has a lower average than the residual category. These results may reflect our failure to properly identify the juice committees, or reveal the overwhelming power of caucus leaders to control the chamber and, by extension, the flow of campaign resources. We suspect the latter. Several studies of state legislative caucuses show they are instrumental in channeling funds to races that are competitive, so even rank-and-file members are able to receive significant contributions.¹³ Based on journalistic accounts of Willie Brown's tenure, we believe that the distribution of

¹³ We assert this based on casual comparison between the distribution of resources and where the competitive assembly races were. Clucas (1995) also demonstrates how Assembly caucus leaders were adept at controlling and distributing funds to secure the maximum number of seats in the next election. For good analyses of how the caucus leadership performs this re-distributive function, see Gierzynski (1992) and Shea (1995). In the next version of this study, we intend to identify the sources of these funds in more detail, so that we know what portion came from party organizations or caucus accounts. In contrast to interest groups, parties may contribute to legislators for reasons other than the political power of the recipient.

Figure 1. Assembly Average Contributions 1986 vs 1996

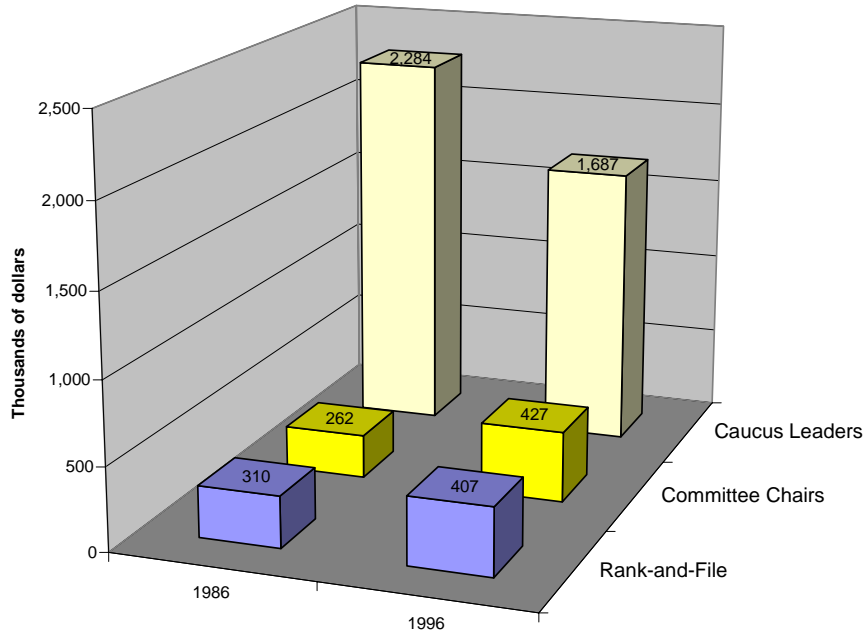
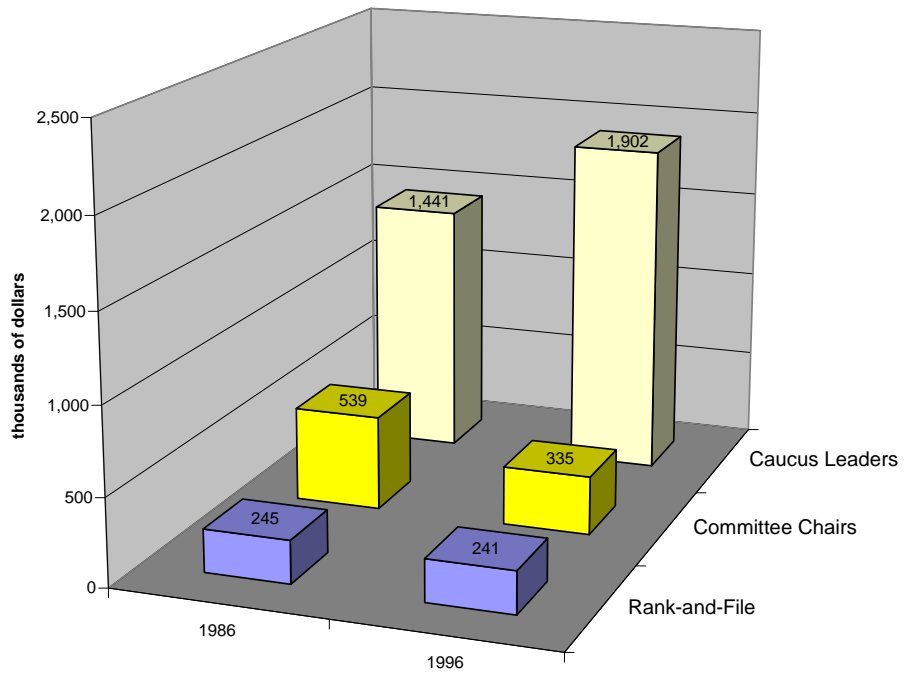


Figure 2. Senate Average Contributions 1986 vs 1996



campaign contributions in the Assembly was an accurate reflection of the power concentrated in the hands of the Speaker.¹⁴

In 1996, Assembly caucus leaders do not receive as many contributions relative to other members. Instead, they receive contributions that are only 4 times greater than either juice committee chairs or members in the residual category. The fact that juice committee chairs are receiving as much as other members may reflect the caucus leader's weakening ability to redistribute resources to where they are needed to win races, but we leave this speculation for another study.

In the Senate for the 1985-1986 cycle, the situation was clearly different (see Figure 2). While the caucus leadership received more contributions than other members, their campaign treasuries did not dwarf those of other members as they did in the Assembly. The caucus leadership averaged \$1.4 million in contributions compared to \$539,000 for juice committee chairs/vice chairs, and \$245,000 in the residual member category. Thus, caucus leaders received almost three times as much as juice chairs, and almost six times as much as other members. These differences are significantly different than in the Assembly, particularly when we consider the gap between the caucus leadership and committee chairs in each chamber. Clearly, the juice committee chairs in the Senate have relatively more power (as demonstrated through institutional giving) than their counterparts in the Assembly.

In the Senate 1995-1996 cycle, we observe one result that does not entirely support our hypotheses. We expected a "flattening" of the contribution patterns across both chambers. In other words, the differences among the 3 groups within each chamber

¹⁴ See for example, Daniel M. Weintraub, "New Course in Sacramento," *State Legislatures* v22, n7 (July-August, 1996):28. Weintraub suggests here that the terms "Ayatollah" and "Imperial Speakership" were

would decrease. This holds true when we compare juice committee chairs to our residual category. Juice chairs only receive about 1-1/2 times as many contributions as other members (not including the caucus leaders). This advantage is certainly less than in 1986 when they received over two times as many contributions.

It appears, however, that Senate caucus leaders are gaining leverage over the other two groups. Caucus leaders now “earn” more than five times as much as juice committee chairs, and almost eight times as much as those in the residual category. How to account for the widening gap between caucus leaders and the others? One explanation is that committee system is a less efficient under term limits, so the key pressure points in chamber move “up and down.” Thus, interest groups put their money on caucus leaders, who gain leverage over weakened committee chairs, and at the same time these contributors spread investments among all members, pursuing the retail strategy that we describe above.

Finally, we turn to differences between the chambers. Recall our premise that the presence of institutional contributions indicates points of influence in the system. Interest groups will tend to make investments where they believe they have the biggest return. The pool of *individual* contributions, by contrast, is less likely to reflect investment motivations because many donors in this category are “friends and family” who support the candidate regardless of specific policy interests.

In our sample, we find that the proportion of institutional contributors in the Assembly decreased by 5 percentage points between 1986 and 1996, while the proportion of institutional support increased by 7 percentage points (ten percent) in the Senate, from 80 to 87 percent of total contributions (see Table 2). This suggests that Senate juice

apt during the Willie Brown era.

committee chairs are increasingly more powerful relative to their Assembly counterparts (even though these same Senate chairs are now less powerful relative to their caucus leaders). In a term limit regime, members of the lower chamber – which is weaker than before – must rely more on individual contributions than they did in the past. This is not to say that institutions play a small role. Table 2 illustrates that even in 1998, 86% of all contributions for Assembly chairs were given by institutions.

Table 2. Contributions from institutional and individual sources, 1986-1996¹⁵

Assembly			
	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Institutional</i>	<i>Mean contribution</i>
1986	10%	90%	\$234,000
1998	14%	86%	\$412,000
Senate			
	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Institutional</i>	<i>Mean contribution</i>
1986	20%	80%	\$387,000
1996	13%	87%	\$443,000

Conclusion

By looking at the flow of campaign contributions to state legislators before and after term limits we observe shifts in the concentration of power within the legislature. We arrive at three important conclusions about the effect of term limits in California on influence within the legislature. First, power is decentralized in the Assembly and the influence of caucus leaders has diminished. Although caucus leaders still receive a great

¹⁵ We cannot explain at this stage why the averages based on the authors' data collection differ slightly from summary statistics provided by the Secretary of State's office. Our data collection for the juice committee sample was based on the detailed contribution reports provided to the Secretary of State by candidates, while the Secretary of State reports cumulative figures based on a summary page attached to these same campaign finance reports.

deal more campaign contributions than other Assembly members, this advantage has decreased considerably between 1986 and 1996.

Assembly juice committee chairs were never particularly advantaged in receiving contributions even in 1986, which suggests to us that the Assembly caucus, under the Speaker's leadership, was the locus of policymaking prior to term limits.¹⁶ In 1986, juice committee chairs actually received fewer contributions, on average, than other Assembly members, and we speculate that these chairs had little independent power from the Speaker.¹⁷ Under a term limit regime, committee chairs appear no more powerful than they were in the past.

The Senate tells a different story. Our second conclusion is that power in the Senate shifted “up and down” – away from juice committee leaders and toward caucus leaders and other members. In 1996, the gap between average contributions to Senate caucus leaders and committee chairs was wider than in 1986. Meanwhile, the gap between committee chairs on powerful committees and other members diminished over this same period, suggesting that the power of committee chairs is waning. We may be observing a de-institutionalization of the Senate chamber, a process by which the organization is becoming less internally complex than it was when specialized committees had more autonomy.

A final conclusion that emerges is that power is drifting from the lower to the upper chamber, as reflected in the increasing proportion of institutional contributions that

¹⁶ The fact that juice committee chairs were not advantaged over other members also suggests to us that the caucus leaders may have been highly efficient in channeling resources to races that would improve the party's prospects collectively.

¹⁷ An alternative explanation is that the committee chairs/vice-chairs were independently powerful but we can show this until we separate party contributions from interest group contributions. The latter group gives its money to powerful legislators rather than the former. It may be true that rank-and-file get a big

make up the share of Senate contributions (and decreasing for Assembly). The trend in the Assembly may be good news for advocates of term limits who argue that new legislators will be less beholden to interest groups. While the direction of change suggests less reliance on institutional groups, we must point out that 80% of the contributions to committee chairs in our sample still come from institutional interests.

The trend toward increasing institutional donors in the Senate suggests that these contributors see the Senate as the place to do business and we believe this situation reflects the increasing gap between experience of Senators versus Assembly members. We are witnessing the transformation of the two houses. The Senate is beginning to look like the old Assembly, with power concentrated in the hands of the Senate caucus leaders, and less differentiation between juice committee chairs and other members. In the Assembly, meanwhile, power is becoming more diffuse, an outcome that was desired by some supporters of term limits. If the Senate used to be known as the sleepy house or retirement home for legislators (relative to the innovative Assembly) it is probably no longer. Rather, the Assembly may now be the chaotic school yard for inexperienced legislators while the Senate is now the house of initiative and competence.

Term limit policies, by changing the opportunity structures of legislators, affect their career strategies. Instead of building up seniority and experience within one house, ambitious legislators see the Senate as the logical next step on the career ladder.¹⁸ In this way, the Senate becomes the repository of experienced legislators who are familiar with conducting legislative business. We believe experience will make the upper house more

portion of their contributions from the caucus leaders or party organizations, while juice committee chairs get most of their contributions from interest groups.

¹⁸ To some extent, this was true in the past, but the flow of former Assembly members to the Senate was much slower than today under term limits

efficient at processing legislation than the lower house, even if Senate committee chairs are less powerful than they were in the pre-term limit era.

Interest groups adapt to the new environment in two ways. First, they allocate resources in places that produce the biggest impact, in this instance the more experienced house where legislation is processed efficiently and where the environment is more predictable. Second, interest groups pursue what Capell (1996) calls a retail strategy, especially in the lower house where caucus leadership is weakened. Instead of concentrating money in the hands of leadership and pursuing policy goals “wholesale,” they broaden their strategy to reach other members.

The changes in career trajectories introduced by term limits may increase the salience of the bicameral system in predicting different policy outcomes between the two chambers. The two-house system that encourages Assembly members to migrate to the upper chamber when they complete their stint in the lower house tempers the full impact of term limit policy. The realization of a “citizen” legislature, a primary goal of term limits policy, might be felt strongly in the lower house. Experience and careerism, however, aggregate in the upper house. The final outcome -- which may not satisfy supporters of term limits -- is that the upper house, which contains a greater proportion of careerists, establishes itself as the prime mover of policy because the lower house cannot organize itself as quickly to transact legislative business.¹⁹

¹⁹ Cain (1996) notes that much depends on the learning curve of new legislators, and whether the requirements of the job are difficult to master relatively quickly.

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