

## Freely Given

The capitalist economic system for most of its history has been both admired and criticized. Its capacity for making productivity possible in human communities is unparalleled.

Even the late American Marxist Robert Heilbroner, famous for his book *The Worldly Philosophers*, acknowledged this after the fall of the Soviet Union. He wrote in the *New Yorker* magazine that “Ludwig von Mises . . . had written of the ‘impossibility’ of socialism, arguing that no Central Planning Board could ever gather the enormous amount of information needed to create a workable economic system. . . . It turns out, of course, that Mises was right.” Mises, of course, was one of the most consistent, uncompromising defenders of pure, laissez-faire capitalism.

Yet, even after the demise of the Soviet system of socialism—the only system that ever aspired to be a fully consistent version of that kind of political economy, with full collective ownership of the means of production (including, as Heilbroner himself noted in his book *Marxism, For and Against*, human labor)—many people continue to criticize the fully free-market system of capitalism. Libertarianism, the broader political equivalent of it, also gets this criticism, namely, that it provides no safety net for people in dire straits, those who are helpless, indigent, needy, or unprepared to deal with market processes.

This is the usual mantra of the critics. The more extreme among them, of course, don’t like anything about capitalism, wanting some kind of dreamlike, fully

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## Term Limits...

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without any real candidate challenges.

But it is a partisan choice. We can keep the same old baddies by extending their terms with this measure but the redistricting *may* break up the choke-hold many current legislators have in their present districts.

State senate President Don Perata is a prime example of a reason to continue the present term limit provisions as he will be termed-out in 2008 at the end of his present third term in office. Perata, who has been investigated by the FBI for influence-peddling and recently received the Golden Pig Award from from U.S. Term Limits for “recognition of the outsized hubris of the most relentlessly, shamelessly grasping and corrupt career politician.”

Reporter Bob Gammon in the *East Bay Express* report, *Living Large: How State Senator Don Perata Uses Campaign Cash to Finance His Lavish Lifestyle* writes, “Over the past 10 years, Perata has spent more than \$1 million of campaign cash on parties and high-end lifestyle expenditures. This includes frequently lavish restaurants in the Bay Area where his 10 year tabs total \$119,517, and hosting country club events owned by top contributors at a cost of \$121,746 for the past four.”

The “Gut Term Limits” initiative to pass this legislation is supported by a \$250,000 contribution by the California Teachers Association and the Los Angeles casinos. P.A.C. has also contributed \$250,000, with the California Hospital Association ponying up \$100,000—all of this to buy favors with the legislative leadership. Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez, also in need of passage of the initiative to retain his post, says

*lawmakers never consider the impact on legislation or donations to either the initiative or other political campaign. “If it’s good public policy to vote against, we don’t think twice about it.”*

If voters believe this, I have a bridge in Brooklyn I’d like to give them a chance to buy on the cheap. Derek Cressman of the Popular Institute is more candid. “Big labor unions are giving money to these term limits efforts in an effort to curry favor with the legislative leadership.”

Well funded business and labor interests will continue to employ all the smoke and mirrors available if they wish to prevail against the public assessment of the legislature by the recent field poll showing that only 33% of voters approve the legislature’s performance. New legislative arrogance appears almost daily. In July, two democratic lawmakers legally collected more than \$35,000 in “travel and living expenses” they both missed because they were *at home*. In August, state senators for both parties were collecting expense money of \$162 a day *even though the legislature was not in session*. Legislators receive a base salary of \$116,208 a year.

The key is what Governor Schwarzenegger will do. In the 2003 recall campaign he brandished a broom on the Capitol steps promising to sweep the place clean. Now he is courting favor with Nuñez and Perata with the hope of passing universal healthcare and a reform redistricting package that would set up a so-called independent commission *approved by legislative leaders* to establish district boundaries. If the Governor strikes a deal, he will end any pretense of being a reformer. Voters beware—cut this deal off at the ballot box.

*- Wally Reemelin*

## Revolving Door...

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have bailed out—early retirement, resigning to work elsewhere—like a crew taking life boats to leave a sinking ship. Why is all this happening?

The League has talked to former employees of the Assessor’s Office. Some have contacted The League with their concerns. Among the complaints, “mismanagement by the Assessor,” “don’t want to hear your opinion,” “don’t trust staff to do the job,” “property owner’s always right/don’t want complaints from property owners,” and on complicated properties, to staff, “don’t need to know how to evaluate property, just do it.”

Apparently, Assessor’s Office policy is

*not listening to experienced staff and on the other hand directing some inexperienced personnel to assess complicated commercial properties.* This is something of a disfunction and costly to taxpayers with lost county revenue, plus the cost of recruiting new staff members. The size of the Assessor’s Office has dramatically increased since 1990, and out of proportion to the number of properties in Placer County. The property evaluations have increased many fold, but the actual number of properties at a much lower scale. In 1989, there were 58 staff positions. That number has risen to 85 members, a 46% increase. Last year, the request for one additional staff member was denied by the County Supervisors.

Modern accounting and tabulating equipment have simplified and speed up the assessment procedures. Most new housing in developments are of three or four floor plans spread throughout the site, and these can readily be grouped together in the assessment procedure. An on-site property inspection by an experienced appraiser is important, but is not required of each property of a 6,000 parcel residential development where ambiance and amenities are about the same and house plans are repeated or merely flopped over, none of which really affects the property evaluation. So, a sampling appraisal is considered and used.

The League is informed that a complaint

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