California's Bicameral Legislature

When California became a state in 1850 the framers of the state's Constitution established a bicameral legislature by creating a lower house to represent the people and an upper house to represent the counties. The framers did this to prevent one political party from dominating the political landscape.

They understood that with a functional legislature the people in the urban counties could not pursue an agenda that benefitted themselves at the expense of the rural counties. A bicameral legislature created an important safeguard against a tyranny of the majority.

In 1964-65 as a result of the Supreme Court decision in Reynolds vs Sims California turned their bicameral legislature into a unicameral legislature with both houses representing the people and no house (the senate) representing the 58 counties in the state.

With this change, California created an opportunity for one political party to completely control the legislative branch of government. With the checks and balances it was impossible for the tyranny of the majority.

The following 40 Senatorial Districts in 1961 were as follows.

District 1   Lassen, Modoc & Plumas

District 2   Del Norte & Siskiyou Counties

District 3   Humboldt County

District 4   Lake & Mendocino Counties

District 5   Shasta & Siskiyou Counties

District 6   Butte County

District 7   Placer County

District 8   Colusa, Glenn & Tehama Counties

District 9   El Dorado & Amador County

District 10 Sutter & Yuba County

District 11 Napa & Yolo Counties

District 12 Sonoma County

District 13 Marin County

District 14 San Francisco County

District 15 Solano County

District 16 Alameda County

District 17 Contra Costa County

District 18 Santa Clara County

District 19 Sacramento County

District 20 San Joaquin County

District 21 San Mateo County

District 22 Stanislaus County

District 23 Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties

District 24 Madera & Merced Counties

District 25 Monterey County

District 26 Alpine, Inyo & Mono Counties

District 27 Kings County

District 28 Calaveras, Tuolumne & Mariposa Counties

District 29 San Luis Obispo County

District 30 Fresno County

District 31 Santa Barbara County

District 32 Tulare County

District 33 Ventura County

District 34 Kern County

District 35 Orange County