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PRIMARY RESULTS PRESAGE EVEN FEWER LAWYER-LAWMAKERS

The number of lawyers in the Legislature, already at a 35-year low, is likely to shrink even further next session. A quick preliminary count suggests that November will find the Legislature two lawyers lighter than the current 28 (23.3%).

The situation in the state Senate, which currently boasts 14 attorneys among its 40 members (35%), is pretty well set: The house will lose four lawyers in November – Democrats [John Burton](#) (San Francisco), [Byron Sher](#) (Stanford), and [John Vasconcellos](#) (San Jose), and Republican [Ross Johnson](#) (Irvine), and the only attorney likely to be added is current Assembly Member [Joe Simitian](#) (Palo Alto), replacing Sher. Thus it looks as if the Senate will see a net loss of three attorneys, bringing its numbers down to 11 of 40 (27.5%).

The Assembly, as always, is far more fluid and less predictable. Term limits will end the Assembly careers of six of the 14 current lawyer-legislators: [Darrell Steinberg](#) (D-Sacramento), [Ellen Corbett](#) (D-San Leandro), [Simitian](#) (D-Palo Alto), [Hannah-Beth Jackson](#) (D-Santa Barbara), [Robert Pacheco](#) (R-Walnut), and [Lou Correa](#) (D-Santa Ana). On the other hand, Tuesday's election gave primary victories to five attorneys who look at the moment to have an easy run to victory in November: Noreen Evans (D-Santa Rosa, 7th AD), Dave Jones (D-Sacramento, 9th AD), Alberto Torrico (D-Fremont, 20th AD), Van Tran R-Garden Grove, 68th AD), and Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana, 69th AD).

Those five likely will be joined by Juan Arambula (D-Fresno, 31st AD) and Pedro Nava (D-Santa Barbara, 35th AD), who won their primaries but appear, at least on paper, to have more competitive races in November.

Assuming all seven Assembly candidates listed above emerge victorious, the lower house will see a net gain of one attorney, bringing the total to 15, or 19%. That would mean a net loss of two attorneys in the Legislature as a whole, bringing the total to 26 (21.7%).

Things could change slightly in the Assembly, however, in the unlikely event provisional and absentee ballots change the results of two elections where attorney candidates -- Elia Pirozzi (R-Redlands, 63rd AD) and John Carcione (D-Redwood City, 21st AD) -- were trailing by small margins after election day. And, of course, there is a slim chance

that a current lawyer-legislator could be the victim of an upset in November.

For reference, an unofficial count of lawyer-legislators shows 56 in 1971 (46.7%), 46 in 1981 (38.3%), and 30 in 1991 (25%).

LAW LIBRARY TASK FORCE

The newly created Task Force on County Law Libraries on Friday held its initial meeting in Sacramento. The task force was created pursuant to [AB 1095 \(Corbett\)](#) of last year. Assembly Member [Ellen Corbett](#) is the chair of the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

The nine-member body includes three representatives from the courts; three representatives from counties; and three representatives from county law libraries. The task force is chaired by the Honorable Michael T. Garcia, Superior Court judge from Sacramento.

The task force is charged with identifying the needs of county law library related to operations and facilities. The group is to make recommendations for funding county law library operations, facility improvements, and expansion. Such recommendations are to be included in a report to be submitted to the Judicial Council and the Legislature on or before January 1, 2005.

The genesis of the task force arose out of concerns about the fiscal health of county law libraries and their ability to provide adequate, up-to-date publications and services. When AB 1095 was heard by the Assembly and Senate Judiciary Committees, it was readily apparent that some members of the Legislature and the legal community have serious concerns about the current status of many county law libraries. More specifically, some legislators expressed concerns about the extent to which inadequate county law libraries present an access to justice issue regarding those persons representing themselves before the court who have no other means to review legal documents or publications.

For the most part, county law libraries are funded by a surcharge on civil filing fees. The law provides for a minimum fee but county boards of supervisors may raise the fee periodically. Counties are required to provide minimal support to the libraries, typically in the areas of facilities, utilities and furnishings. Neither counties nor the state provides direct financial assistance to the county law libraries.