

Search Terms: **Part-time Job?**

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SECTION: OPINION**LENGTH:** 585 words**HEADLINE:** Part-time job?**BODY:**

SEEMS Gov. Schwarzenegger started yet another firestorm while on vacation recently, saying he would like to see the Legislature move from full- to part-time.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich quickly gave the idea a thumbs-up, noting while an assemblyman, he authored legislation in the '70s to return California's Legislature to part-time. Until 1966, California went along with most of the nation in fielding a part-time Legislature. The first full-time California governing body got down to business under then Gov. Ronald Reagan. Touted as the model for management of large-population states, it worked for awhile a short while.

Now, most Californians would welcome a Legislature that met for only three months or so. Less time for mischief making, muckraking and dollar taking. Bring in a balanced budget and then back home to real jobs because "citizen" legislators as Sen. Bob Margett believes would be a "more Jeffersonian" group, certainly wouldn't make enough to keep them away from private enterprise for too long. Margett too has tried changing the status quo with a constitutional amendment to confer part-time status on himself and fellow lawmakers. It tanked.

Some have said that part-time pols tied to nine-to-five jobs couldn't afford the luxury of three months without a paycheck. That's why an important part of any enabling legislation would be to mandate employers hold jobs open for legislators doing the people's business in the capital. Margett believes a part-time system would allow more people from different professions and rungs on the economic ladder to serve.

But the main reason we'd like to see some serious study on the matter: There's a reason our Assembly and Senate members are called "lawmakers." Last year alone, Sacramento pooh-bahs floated more than 3,000 bills. Just getting legislation to committees, let alone through the Assembly and Senate, is expensive, according to Margett who recently sat down with us. A large staff working many hours is par for the course in bill research and policy development.

Gov. Schwarzenegger was right in characterizing much of this work as coming up with "strange" bills in an interview with the Los Angeles Times. Assemblyman Ray Haynes, R- Temecula, a proponent of the part-time concept, named a few in a recent commentary. One of the wackiest is an idea to incorporate feng shui in its building code. We agree with Haynes, this Legislature has way too much time on its hands.

The argument put forward by those who oppose the idea out of hand [so far only Democratic legislators] that California is too large to be run on a part-time basis, is specious at best. Texas that really, really big state is corralled by folks who only meet 180 days every two years. We hear Texans love it, even allowing the governor to call a special session of up to 30 days if need be. Remember only California, New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan are saddled with full-time, career politicians.

Certainly the state could save on salaries and housing. Perhaps a daily expense allotment would suffice.

Of course, only legislators would be part-time, with other elected officials and the bureaucracy full-time. Well, these are the folks who do the real work, anyway.

It's a concept worth exploring and we'd like to see some respected policy wonks, including our close-by Claremont-based Rose Institute well-versed in the workings of Los Angeles County [the real gorilla of governments] tackle this intriguing idea.

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