UC San Diego launches program to reform California Constitution, help make state government work again

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UC SAN DIEGO LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO REFORM CALIFORNIA CONSTITUTION, HELP MAKE STATE GOVERNMENT WORK AGAIN

Massive fiscal woes, recurring legislative deadlock, and an increasing tendency on the part of the voters to "fix" government via the initiative and referendum process, are all factors which indicate that California's state government has some fundamental, structural problems that must be addressed. A new University of California, San Diego project will examine these problems vis-a- vis the state's needs, and develop a series of recommendations for changing the California state constitution.

"The task of the California Constitutional Revision Project will be to offer a careful plan for drastic constitutional reform," said Mathew McCubbins, a professor of political science at UCSD and the director of the new project. "To do this, we first need to bring to light the important underlying principles of democratic government and explore them in relation to the specific needs of California."

The ultimate goal of the project, according to McCubbins, is to assist the members of the state's Constitutional Reform Commission in its efforts to revise the constitution. The Commission was established last year by Governor Wilson and the state legislature to propose needed amendments to the state constitution. The Commission's suggested amendments are slated to be brought before the voters no later than Nov. 1996.

UCSD's California Constitution Revision Project consists of two major components. Over the next several months, faculty members involved with the project will write a series of essays examining a wide range of constitutional principles and processes, including the budgetary process and the initiative and referendum process. These essays will appear in major newspapers throughout California over the next several months. Subsequently, they will be edited and published in book form by the UCSD Press in spring 1995.

"The prototype for our effort is The Federalist Papers," explained McCubbins, "which were written to explain and justify the principles of our federal constitution to voters over 200 years ago. We hope to raise such issues in the public sphere to make citizens aware of the tradeoffs that must be made in order to create a viable, lasting governing structure."

The project, one of the major multidisciplinary programs of UCSD's new Law and Behavioral Sciences Project, will also sponsor a major public forum in spring 1995 to discuss and exchange ideas about California's constitution. The conference, which will bring together lawmakers, scholars and members of the public, will be videotaped for broadcast on public television stations.

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