

CAPITOL OFFICE  
STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814  
(916) 651-4037

DISTRICT OFFICE  
940 SOUTH COAST DR.  
SUITE 185  
COSTA MESA, CA 92626  
(714) 662-6050

# California State Senate



COMMITTEES  
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BUDGET & FISCAL REVIEW  
GOVERNANCE & FINANCE

**SENATOR**  
**JOHN M. W. MOORLACH**  
THIRTY-SEVENTH SENATE DISTRICT

October 25, 2016

Senator Robert Hertzberg  
Chair, Senate Committee on Governance and Finance  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 4038  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Ben Allen  
Chair, Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 2054  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senators Allen and Hertzberg:

I appreciate the time that the California Senate is taking to understand and consider the issue of proper and effective sizes of county representation on their supervisorial boards. As a former Orange County Supervisor, I would like to offer some thoughts for the Committee since I cannot attend the hearing on Thursday.

Last year, our colleague, Senator Tony Mendoza, drafted Senate Constitutional Amendment 8, which, if approved by the voters statewide, would have required counties with a population greater than three million residents after the 2020 United States Census to have a governing body consisting of at least seven members which are elected by district. On its face, this seems like a noble goal, but it comes with very little understanding of the nuances that can only be understood by someone who has actually served on a county board.

As the esteemed Chairs may know, in 1996, voters in Orange County rejected Measure U, a charter proposal to expand its board of supervisors from five to nine members. They

realized that, even after the Orange County bankruptcy, little would have been different had the Board been a larger size.

As I testified in opposition to SCA 8 on the Senate Floor on September 10, 2015, any county that wants to expand its board can already do so through amending its charter by an initiative. To date, I have yet to hear any clamoring from the public on this issue.

The size of a governing body is an essential component of the government, and changing it should be something initiated, by the electorate. Indeed, if the state were to follow the same path of representation in the State Legislature using Orange County as a proxy, with likely more than 40 million people in the state by 2020, both houses of the legislature should increase by at least 30 percent to appropriately represent the people of the state.

It seems as if we are seeking to fix a policy that is not broken. Los Angeles and Orange County are working and have wonderful diversity.

It is not clear whether a bigger board would be a better board or would represent the populace more effectively. California has dealt with its growing population largely by creating new counties from existing ones. Orange County was a beneficiary of that process in 1889 after the California State Legislature allowed for the people to vote. Reviewing this precedent, which has allowed the formation of several other counties in California, such as Imperial and Kings, should be something the legislature should recommend as a proven remedy.

Also, if size is the concern, the legislature should also review the other end of the spectrum. Perhaps the merging of smaller counties should also be explored. This would make your exercise more global and not beholden to one specific organization's agenda.

Should the committee decide to move forward on any recommendation on how to better represent the people of California, I serve ready and willing to assist in pursuing sensible and feasible options.

Very truly yours,



JOHN M. W. MOORLACH  
Senator, Thirty-Seventh District