

A LOOK BACK: REFLECTIONS FROM RAY LEBOV

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Next month, former OGA [Office of Governmental Affairs] Director Ray LeBov will leave state service after 30 years. *The Capitol Connection* is pleased to be able to mark the occasion by asking Ray to reflect on his 13 years representing the Judicial Council in Sacramento.

Capitol Connection: How has the standing of the Judicial Council and the judiciary changed with the other branches of state government?

LeBov: For a number of reasons, the Council is much more central to the decision-making process in Sacramento. Among other things, I attribute the progress to the Chief Justice's leadership and Bill Vickrey's vision and, I like to think, to the efforts of our Office of Governmental Affairs. Additionally, the maturation of the branch in terms of its understanding of the political and other dynamics in Sacramento has been critical.

The contributions of our partners in the justice system have also been essential. For example, many judges and lawyers have worked diligently through the Bench-Bar Coalition to help bring the message of fairness and access in our courts to the legislative and executive branches. One other key aspect of maturation is the ability and willingness of the judiciary to "speak with a single voice." The branch has demonstrably heeded Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Martha Escutia's warning that to do otherwise would result in our being ignored. One example is that the last three times that new judgeships were created, the other branches deferred to the council's ranking of comparative need among the courts of the state. If some courts had not been willing to support the statewide agenda, it is clear that there would not have been any positions created for any court.

Capitol Connection: How did your 16 years of experience as counsel to legislative committees, including the Assembly Judiciary Committee, prepare you for your role as director of the Council's Office of Governmental Affairs?

LeBov: When I started my first job in the Capitol 30 years ago, I felt as though I had landed on a strange planet. I quickly figured out what I knew regarding the culture, mores and workings of the capitol: next to nothing. I then made the best decision of my career: to be a sponge. I closely observed who succeeded here and why they were successful as well as learned the reasons why others failed. The incorporation of the knowledge gained through that process is really what prepared me best.

On another level, my legislative staff career enabled me to learn the subject matter and the "rules of the game" and to develop important personal relationships with legislators, staff, lobbyists and others.

Capitol Connection: What are the most significant accomplishments during your tenure with the Administrative Office of the Courts?

LeBov: It has been an incredible 13 years of positive changes. The most important is state trial court funding which has had so many dramatic positive impacts: equal access, statewide policies, funding and budget stability, and elimination of the goofy dual-funding responsibility between state and county government. Other important accomplishments include trial court unification, the Court Facilities Act, "one-day, one-trial" jury legislation, and the Trial Court Employees Governance and Protection Act.

Capitol Connection: What qualities are necessary to be an effective legislative advocate?

LeBov: Nearly everyone correctly cites subject matter knowledge, knowledge of the rules and workings of the Legislature, credibility, integrity, resourcefulness, flexibility and “people skills.” One particularly insightful former OGA employee adds “patience and timing.” It is critical not only to do the right things but also to be sure to do them in the right order and at the right time. Phil Jackson said it best in his book *Sacred Hoops*: “The farmer who’s so eager to help his crops grow that he slips out at night and tugs on the shoots inevitably ends up going hungry.”

I would add that the best advocates are outstanding at all four components of the job: diagnosis, analysis, strategy, and implementing tactics.

Capitol Connection: How did term limits affect your approach to advocacy?

LeBov: For us it has been a two-edged sword. Pre-term limits, the concentration of legislative power meant that we had to persuade only a few people: generally legislative leadership and committee chairs. Most of the other members, willingly or not, deferred to them on most issues. This often meant that leaders saw an opportunity to “leverage” us, sometimes on completely unrelated issues, before they would agree to support our initiatives. Today, the opportunity to do that has diminished. So the job is more difficult in that there are many more people to inform and persuade, but the plus side is that the process focuses much more on the merits of issues than on extraneous considerations.

Capitol Connection: What changes would you like to see in Sacramento?

LeBov: Acknowledging that the system currently functions pretty well and the political impossibility of what I would propose, I believe that a comprehensive package that includes open primaries, fair redistricting, more realistic term limits, elimination of the 2/3 vote requirement for the budget, and elimination of budgeting by initiative would greatly enhance the process.

Capitol Connection: What are your post-AOC plans?

LeBov: I will continue my career as an advocate in Sacramento in some capacity, probably in the private sector. I intend to stay involved in some of the same important issues and certainly will strive to maintain the great friendships that I have been fortunate to have with so many people in the judicial branch.