

Preface

Whether the issue is suburban sprawl, affirmative action, the rise of the information economy or the crisis in managed care, California policy debates have long played a major role in setting the nation's political and social agendas. The sheer size of its economy – the seventh largest in the world -- its strategic position on the Pacific Rim, its remarkable cultural and ethnic diversity, and its willingness to embrace new ideas all contribute to its unique trendsetting role. The challenge facing California policy makers on all levels of government and in the private and non-profit sectors is how to be among the first to identify and understand the significance of these important issues that drive state and national policy debates.

The UCLA Anderson Forecast and the California Policy Options program of the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research combine to help policy makers do just that. The Forecast provides an expert appraisal of how the California economy is expected to perform during the coming year. The Policy Options program provides a kind of over-the-horizon radar that identifies critical policy issues and provides a balanced and incisive analysis of those issues. The result, we believe, is a unique and effective mix of information and analysis that will enable decision makers to begin acting on, rather than reacting to, emerging public issues of significance.

The following chapters address a wide range of issues, from state and local fiscal relations and the politics of aging to crime control policy, welfare reform, and the relationship between university research and the high-tech industry. This broad scope reflects not only California's complexity, but also the interdisciplinary mission and expertise of the School of Public Policy and Social Research. Founded in 1994, the School is a leader in creating a new paradigm in policy education, research and action. Our distinctive approach emphasizes solving problems across boundaries, particularly at the growing intersection between the public, private and non-governmental sectors. It is a mode of problem solving ideally suited to the challenges facing us in California today.

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Dean

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