

THE FRONT LINE

The Machine

Duane Dichiara

GOP factions have always existed and have always struggled for control of the Party agenda and programs. Generally, the most effective insurgent argument in such struggles is that those in power are ineffective at winning elections. This struggle is healthy — regularly bringing new blood and ideas into the GOP, replacing the stale or ineffective with the fresh and energized.

California's two largest GOP factions identify themselves as "conservative" and "moderate." The moderates, who are once again challenging the long-dominant conservatives, critique conservative platform positions, programs, and organizations as "ineffective." Currently, the fight centers on the Orange County Central Committee and, specifically, its long-time chairman, Tom Fuentes. The ouster of a county chairman would normally be inconsequential to statewide, and even local, elections because most county Parties do little, even on the jobs they exist to perform: voter registration, Party building, election day "get out the

Duane Dichiara is campaign manager for Assemblyman Tom McClintock, a GOP candidate in California's 19th state Senate district.

vote." But in Orange County, even hardcore moderates find it hard to deny that the local Party performs these tasks, and many others, better than any county Party in the state, and perhaps the nation.

The recent slight narrowing of the GOP's Orange County registration lead is due mostly to increased "Decline to State" voters, a 10-year-long, statewide phenomenon. Republicans still hold a dramatic 49.6 to 32 percent



lead over the Democrats in the county. Orange is one of the few county Parties to maintain effective volunteer registration efforts rather than rely completely on state GOP paid registration programs.

It also keeps the state's most active and coordinated Party building calendar. Rarely will it *not* list an event: candidate fund raisers, receptions for visiting national leaders, ethnic outreach socials in minority-dominated areas, volunteer precinct captain gatherings.

On election day the most effective GOTV program west of the Mississippi turns out, precinct by precinct, the votes that provide statewide GOP candidates' victory margins. In some elections, of course, the issues, candidates, or voter dynamics disfavor Republicans, and even the most dedicated precinct captains cannot turn out a winning vote — for example, 1998's Assemblyman Jim Morrissey and state Senator Rob Hurtt losses in heavily Democrat districts with a weak top of the ticket. But the real story is that Orange County's GOP was able, for a time, to take and hold these seats at all.

Moderates speculate that another chairman could have used Orange County's natural resources to resist better the Party system deterioration that has plagued California. But where they speculate, Fuentes has performed, for 16 years playing a vital role making the county Party work while chairmen in other GOP-dominated counties struggled to achieve far less. Fuentes coordinated donors, legislators, and activists into what former Assemblyman Gil Ferguson calls, albeit derisively, "The Orange County Machine."

Republicans for New Directions," one of two new organizations seeking to remove Fuentes, is led by Ron Shenkman, an activist in "Republicans for Clin-

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pleasantness. Moreover, he is hoping to obtain legislative approval this year for judicial pay raises. Accordingly, Proposition 24 was doomed as soon as its opponents challenged it in the Supreme Court; George's top priority was to appease the Legislature at any cost. So on October 28, 1999, when John Burton, president pro tem of the state Senate, filed an "original proceeding" directly in the Supreme Court, the only question was whether George would wait until after the election to issue a ruling, hoping that it would fail, or whether he would take the unprecedented step of deciding the case before the voters even went to the polls.

IF HE waited, the voters might let him off the hook, but if they didn't — by passing Proposition 24 — they would be even more upset by a post-election judicial nullification. So George did the dirty deed in advance, even though the ballot preparation deadline was only six weeks away when Burton sought a writ ordering Secretary of State Bill Jones to remove Proposition 24 from the March 7 ballot. It normally

takes the Court many months — sometimes years — to issue a decision after it decides to hear a case. Not this time. On November 10, the Court set an expedited briefing schedule, with briefs from the parties due just two weeks later, and oral argument just eight court days after that. The 5-2 decision, authored by George, was issued just three court days after the hearing. From beginning to end, the case took just six weeks.

Not only was the Court's haste extraordinary, the timing of Burton's challenge was calculated to prevent the proponents of Proposition 24 from resubmitting an alternative initiative in time for the March 7 election. Proposition 24 was originally submitted to the Attorney General on April 5, more than six months prior to Burton's eleventh-hour legal challenge, and the proponents began collecting signatures on May 26. By waiting until October 28 to mount their challenge, the opponents engaged in the most blatant form of sandbagging, but the Supreme Court blithely looked the other way.

What was the basis for George's remarkable decision

WHAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TOLD ABOUT GUN CONTROL

By WILLIAM E. SARACINO

Though the liberal bias of the major media is indisputable, it is often hard to pin down *via* empirical evidence. Thanks to the non-partisan Media Research Center in Alexandria, Virginia, we no longer have that problem when it comes to gun control. As you would have guessed, the media is vehemently anti-Second Amendment.

The Center did a study of two years of gun policy stories on ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC. They found that during those two years, stories that argued for more gun controls numbered 357, while those that argued in favor of either fewer restrictions or the *status quo* numbered 36 — a 10-to-1 bias in favor of one

William E. Saracino is political director of Gunowners of California.

side of the political argument. Where are the FCC enforcers of "fairness" and "diversity" now?

And in case you're wondering, ABC was the worst of that very bad lot. The ABC Evening "News" slanted their stories in favor of more gun control by a ratio of 43-to-3. Good Morning America featured 92 stories pushing the anti-freedom, anti-gun line, while finding time to air a grand total of 1 story that took an opposing view. One.

You'll want to keep these numbers handy for the next time a liberal

dismisses the idea of bias in the media as a conservative fantasy.

And speaking of numbers, here are some from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* sure to inflame your favorite lefty. Seven hundred thousand doctors live in the United States. The average annual number of accidental deaths caused by doctors in this country the last few years is 120,000. Therefore the ratio of accidental deaths per doctor is 0.171-to-1. Eighty *million* gun owners live in this country. The average number of accidental gun deaths in the last few years is 1,500, making the ratio of accidental deaths per gun owner .0000188-to-1. Therefore, statistically, doctors are approximately 9000 times more dangerous than gun owners.

