The California Plural Executive and Governorship

- The Governor heads up the state’s PLURAL EXECUTIVE;
- Whereas, power in the federal executive branch is more concentrated with the president, executive power in California is more decentralized and dispersed with multiple executives handling different aspects within the executive branch
- All eleven plural executives are separately elected by way of popular vote;
- Due to this, these elected executives can be and are often from the party opposite the Gov.
- All executives serve four year terms – a two term limit; all vacancies are filled by the Gov.
- (1) Governor
  - Gubernatorial Powers:
    - (a) Ceremonial & party leader: Greeting world leaders, ribbon cutting, etc.
    - Has prestige due to the prestige of the state
    - Is the leader of his party; lends strength and prestige to that party – much like the president at the natl. party level
    - (b) Appointment power: Makes appointments to fill vacancies for statewide offices, U.S. Senators, U.S. House Representatives, county supervisors, judicial vacancies, municipal and superior courts, state supreme courts and state appeals courts
  - © Legislative leader; Presents an annual budget proposal to the legislature in January, along with a revised proposal in May
  - When the legislature passes the budget and sends it back to the Gov., he rarely signs it as is; the Gov. will use his power of line-item veto to take out some items and keep others
  - Also the power of full veto
  - Active governors have been known to negotiate directly with both parties within the legislature, as well as various interest groups and lobby groups with regard to legislation, parts of the budget, etc. – Very similar to the “Bargaining President”

- The Governor’s equivalent to the President’s White House Office (staff) is the Gov.’s personal staff – a group of approx. 100 coordinators who assist the Gov. with legislative manners, budget analysis
  - Usually are his closest advisors as well as some close friends and confidants
  - The personal staff is not confirmed by the state Senate

- However, the Gov.’s cabinet is confirmed by the state senate
  - These cabinet officials are state secretaries that are appointed by the Gov. and confirmed by the Senate
However, separate from the appointed cabinet secretaries serving under the control of the Governor are the plural executives who are elected separately from the Gov. and, thus, serve separately and independently from the Gov.

These are:

(2) Lt. Gov.
- Because the Lt. Gov. is elected separately from the Gov., he can and often does cause friction with the gov., especially if he is of the opposite party as the gov.
- While an opposing party Lt. Gov. does have some political influence with the opposite party (as the highest elected opposition party official), he has little official influence
- Is interim governor when the Gov. is out of the state or country
- Presides ceremoniously over the Senate

(3) Attorney General
- Heads the state Dept. of Justice
- Acts as the formal legal counsel for the state and most state agencies
- Supervises the various county DA’s in their prosecution of criminal defendants
- Is responsible for the preparation of all ballot props.

(4) Controller
- The Chief accountant for the state
- Accounts for and pays out all state money
- Advise local govt. on financial matters
- Gives annual reports to the public on the financial condition of local govt.
- Chairs the Franchise Tax Board
- Sits on the state Board of Equalization
- The Board of Equalization:
  - Is a five member body
  - Assesses how local property taxes are assessed in the state
  - Collects sales taxes, cigarette taxes, gas taxes, alcohol taxes, beverage taxes, etc.

A Look at Recent Governors

- Overall, governed as a moderate, right-center Republican
- Increased taxes several times in order to balance the budget, despite running on a platform against taxes
- Sought policies that brought "law and order" (classical/social conservative values); Fired the liberal president of UC Berkeley, mobilized the natl. guard to put down student radicals demonstrating at campuses
- Cut the rate of increase (slowed the rate the growth) in state spending
- Tightened, though did not eliminate, welfare provisions
- Vetoed bills to establish bilingual education
- Helped bring about the closure of most mental health outpatient clinics and the firing of 3,000 mental hospital employees
- However, Reagan also supported automatic cost-of-living increases in welfare
- Increased state funding to higher education
- Decriminalized small amounts of marijuana
- Signed a relaxed abortion law
- Spoke out against a state ballot initiative that would have barred gay teachers from public schools
- Created strong anti-pollution agencies

(2) **Gerry Brown (1974-1982)**

- Governed from the left-center
- Although the national economy experienced two recessions during Brown’s eight year reign, 2.2 million new jobs were created in California under the Brown Admin.
- Signed a billion dollar cut – moving CA. from being the 4th most taxed state to the 23rd most taxed state at the time
- Supported civil rights legislation, labor unions
- Opposed the death penalty
- Advocated for environmental protection by adopting the strictest air pollution laws in the nation
- Banned toxic chemicals that were still allowed at the federal level
- Halted construction of nuclear power plants in CA; advocated for alternate energy sources
- Repealed criminal penalties for private sexual acts between consenting adults and signed an executive order banning discrimination, based on sexual orientation
- Appointed many women and minorities to the state Supreme Court, other judicial appointments and within his administration
- However, on many economic issues, Brown was not in favor of expanded govt. involvement; spoke out on the need for people to solve problems apart from govt. intervention
- Initially opposed Prop. 13 until he saw strong public support for it - sought to make Prop. 13 work by using state surplus $ from the budget to provide schools and local govs.

**George Deukmejian ("Duke") (1982-1990)**

- A fiscal conservative who used veto on the Democratic legislature over 4,000 times!; In 1983, used line-item veto to slash over $1.1 billion from the budget – amounted to 4% of total budgetary appropriations
- Opposed gun control; benefited from a handgun control ballot initiative on the ballot during the 1982 election campaign that enabled white, conservative gun control advocates to vote both against the proposition and vote for “Duke”
- Strong supporter of fiscal discipline, cutting govt. spending (including in education) and fostering growth through tax cuts and deregulation of industry
- Led to the weakening of environmental regulations and laws
- Was a strong “law and order” governor; build 14 new prisons and supported the death penalty
- Appointed more than 1,000 judges that enforced tougher criminal sentencing
- Seen more as a “care-taker” rather an activist with an ambitious agenda

(3) **Pete Wilson (1990-1998)**

- Governed from the moderate right:center
- Came into office during a recession and severe budget crisis; budget passage was stalled for 64 days;
- Wilson broke the deadlock by uniting with the Democratic majority and signing a tax increase as a way to help balance the budget
- Increased sales and income taxes during this time
- His 1994 re-election was based around an anti-immigration/illegal immigration theme – support for Prop. 187
- Strong support and voter turnout mobilized by and for 187 enabled voters to vote both for the measure and for Wilson’s re-election.
- Also helped support Props. 209 and 227 (1996, 1998)
- Signed the “three strikes” law
- Cut spending for education in much of his first term, however increased $ for education in his second term, as the state showed both a strong budget surplus and strong economic growth