

**2005-2006 PRESIDENT'S AWARD
FOR RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY**



The President's Award for Research and Creative Activity was established in 1989 and is given each year to recognize extraordinary research and creative activity over the past five years by a member of the Sacramento State faculty. Nominees for the award must be in their first ten years of service at Sacramento State. This year's recipient is Dr. Ted Lascher, Professor and Chair in the Department of Public Policy & Administration. Professor Lascher is the seventeenth recipient of this award.

Dr. Lascher received his bachelor's degree from Occidental College. His graduate work was done in political science at the University of California, Berkeley where he received both his M.A. and his Ph.D. His dissertation was entitled "Must One Be Crazy to Do This Job? Causes and Consequences of Job Satisfaction among Local Legislators." Prior to joining the Sacramento State faculty in the spring of 1996, he taught at Harvard University and the University of California, Davis.

He is the author of *The Politics of Automobile Insurance Reform: Ideas, Institutions, and Public Policy in North America* published by Georgetown University Press. In addition, he is the co-editor with Michael Powers of *The Economics and Politics of Choice No-Fault Insurance* published by Kluwer Academic Publishers. Both were done while teaching full-time at Sacramento State. In addition he is the author of more than a dozen articles in refereed journals as well as numerous book reviews and conference papers. His article "Constituency Size and Incumbent Safety: A Reexamination" was selected as co-winner of the award for the best 2005 article in *Political Research Quarterly*.

Lascher is Co-Director of the M.S. Program in Urban Land Development and is a member of the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies' curriculum committee. He has served as a member of the Faculty Senate and a member of the Subcommittee on Research and Creative Activity.

HOW CALIFORNIA BECAME A “BLUE STATE:” TRENDS IN ETHNICITY, IDEOLOGY, AND POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION

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As recently as the early 1990s, commentary suggested that California was “going Republican.” Yet by 2003 every statewide elected official was a Democrat (a pattern broken only—if dramatically-- by Arnold Schwarzenegger’s victory in the gubernatorial recall election). Furthermore, while the last two presidential elections were close nationally, the Democratic candidates won California by more than a million votes each. What had changed in the Golden State?

Answering the above question requires examining the political sentiments of average voters, not just the opinions of political pundits. To do so my colleague and I assembled a set of numerous polls of California adults over a 21-year period. We used these data to assess political trends. We also compared the California trends to those evident in national polls.

Based on our data analysis, I will argue that ordinary Californians moved toward the Democratic Party in the 1990s, and did so relative to the entire American electorate. In part this was a result of changing demographics, with the sharply rising and already Democratic leaning Latino and Asian American populations constituting growing portions of the overall California electorate. But the pattern also resulted from growing Democratic identification among the above groups, traceable in part to Republican backed ballot measures seen to target particular ethnic groups. Interestingly, there is no evidence that Democratic gains resulted from voters having become more liberal. I will also discuss implications of these findings for the present political scene.