

Essay on direct democracy in california

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



In October, 1911, the people of California adopted three new types of balloting, and the new system allowed voters to reject certain laws passed by legislators or even introduce initiatives that could be voted to become laws. The reason why the Californians introduced these changes was because there was a perception that the state government was making laws meant to protect business interests instead of making laws that the people wanted. This culminated into the clamor for change of the state's constitution in order to allow for referendums, recalls and initiatives. The fact that the practice of direct democracy in California has had its own strengths and weaknesses cannot be gainsaid.

It has been said that direct democracy is made by the people for the people. This is absolutely true for the people of California because they wield the power to recall their representatives, and they can propose new laws through a referendum. In most representative democracies, the elected representatives make laws and the people have to abide by the laws even if they are uncomfortable with them. This does not happen in California. If some people feel aggrieved by some laws passed by the legislators, they can reject such laws. All what those aggrieved need is 900, 000 signatures, and the matter is put to a referendum. Above all, the people have the power to recall an elected representative if they feel that the official is not performing. Nonetheless, the practice of direct democracy in California has had its shortcomings.

As Aristotle once said, democracy leads to mob rule. He could have been talking of California. Some of the initiatives passed into laws in California unnecessarily constrain the state government. For example, the Proposition

13 which largely reduced property tax and made it almost impossible to make amendments to the law in future. Another example is the proposition 98 which directed 40 % of the state budget to be used for education only. Although hugely popular at that time, these legislations unnecessarily curb the state's mandate. Nevertheless, the existence of direct democracy in California has enabled the elected officials to be accountable and transparent, and this is the spirit of democracy.