



# INFORMER

#1, February 2016

Professional Engineers in California Government

## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

**Government’s basic purpose is to protect the people it represents.** That is why we have police, firefighters, the military, cancer research, a reliable supply of clean water, food and drug testing, river levees, and much more. Right after public protection comes **servicing the people** who elect and pay for the government in a wide variety of ways -- transportation, schools, hospitals, utilities, etc.



**The public relies on PECG members** to “build” infrastructure or, more literally, to design the projects and inspect the work of those who construct them. They look to our members, and those of many other government agencies, to ensure that our water is clean, our air is pure, the environment is protected, and (especially for those who believe in the threat of climate change) the energy sector is converted from fossil fuels to clean, renewable sources.

Public opinion polls by PECG and others show that the people believe government contracts should be competitively bid, with the contract being awarded to a qualified firm that will provide the product or service at the lowest cost to the taxpayer, but increasingly that is not the process that is used. The people believe that someone from a public agency should inspect the construction, whether it’s a highway, a building, or a new house, and they want Caltrans to design state highway projects, but that also is less frequently the



case. Essentially, they want the private sector to do much of the work -- our economy is based on competition in the private sector -- but the government should keep an eye on that work and perform many essential functions itself.

**Oversight of the private sector and giving the taxpayers their money’s worth are two areas in which government at all levels is losing the historic control and role that the people continue to want and expect.**

Government gets blamed a lot. For example, it took more than 20 years to replace the east span of the Bay Bridge. The cost increased from \$1.2 billion to about \$6.4 billion. The media and the politicians blamed Caltrans.

However, the historical facts reveal a different conclusion. The final selection of the design wasn’t made until 15 years after

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### PECG HEADQUARTERS

(916) 446-0400  
455 Capitol Mall, Suite 501  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### PECG SAN FRANCISCO

(415) 861-5720  
100 Pine Street, Suite 750  
San Francisco, CA 94111

### PECG LOS ANGELES

(818) 500-9941  
215 N. Marengo Avenue, Ste 185  
Pasadena, CA 91101

### PECG INSURANCE INFO

(415) 956-1344

### FAX

Headquarters  
(916) 446-0489  
Los Angeles  
(818) 247-2348  
San Francisco  
(415) 861-5360

### EMAIL

[pecg@pecg.org](mailto:pecg@pecg.org)

### PECG TOLL FREE NUMBERS

Sacramento  
(800) 338-1480  
Los Angeles  
(888) 980-7324  
San Francisco  
(800) 924-5575

### VISIT PECG ON THE WEB

[www.pecg.org](http://www.pecg.org)

# PECG LEGISLATIVE DAY -- AND EVENING



Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins (center) meets with PEGC leaders and her San Diego constituents in her Capitol office.



State Senator Isadore Hall (center) brings PEGC's Los Angeles Section leaders to the podium in the State Senate to kick off PEGC's Legislative Day in Sacramento.



Assemblymember Bill Dodd (center) enjoys a moment with PEGC's Margaret Shaeffer and Aaron Dorsch at the Reception.



PEGC Corporate Officers get together with Assembly Speaker-Elect Anthony Rendon (center) in his Capitol office.



State Senator Tony Mendoza and Assemblymember Tom Lackey (center) join PEGC's Los Angeles Section leaders at the Legislative Reception in the State Capitol Rotunda.



The Bargaining Chairs for Unit 9 -- Pam Manwiller, CalHR's Deputy Director of Labor Relations, and Matt Hanson, PEGC's Vice President for Collective Bargaining -- share a lighter moment at the evening Reception.

On February 2, PEGC leaders from around the state converged on Sacramento to meet with 89 State Senators and Assemblymembers and their staff in their Capitol offices. That evening, in a more informal atmosphere, legislators, staff, department heads, and members of State Boards and Commissions joined PEGC leaders at a reception in the Capitol Rotunda, co-hosted by CAPS, representing state scientists. It was a great evening to renew acquaintances and make new friends!

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## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

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the Loma Prieta earthquake because Governors changed their minds three times. Then, despite the recommendations of some engineers, the most expensive and risky alternative, a self-anchored suspension bridge, was selected. Construction costs skyrocketed during the delay. Many features, such as a bikeway, were added, which, along with the tower, ran up the cost. Yet, some of the politicians who blamed Caltrans were the same ones who made the decisions which delayed the project and drove up the costs in the first place.

Conflict and controversy get media and public attention. For example, there were news reports for months about defective anchor rods on the Bay Bridge and water leakage which was causing rust and corrosion. Ultimately, the Seismic Safety Review Committee concluded that “there is no issue as far as seismic safety” because the rods were unnecessary once the tower was in place. Regarding the leaks, after numerous media reports and expensive recommendations, Caltrans engineers bought tubes of industrial grade caulk and applied them to the joints between the road surface and the guardrails. This has almost entirely eliminated the problem at a cost of less than \$100,000.

Thus, in retrospect, the Bay Bridge was a successful project, except for delays and cost increases caused by political infighting and indecision. But what about other large infrastructure projects? The next two issues of the *Informer* will take a look at a few of those.

