

Hi, this is Chris Micheli with the Sacramento governmental relations firm of Aprea & Micheli and an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law. Today's brief podcast is on comparing California government to the governments of other states.

California state government is not unique among the other states. All fifty states provide for a “small r” republican form of government in their individual constitutions. And all the states are based upon the federal government model with three branches of state government: the Legislative Branch, the Executive Branch, and the Judicial Branch. Let's look quickly at all three branches.

Legislative Branch

With one exception, all states are bicameral and they all have upper and lower houses of differing sizes. For the lower houses, half a dozen states provide four year terms while the remaining states provide two year terms. The sizes of the houses range from forty two members to four hundred members.

For the upper houses, a dozen states provide two-year terms while the remaining states provide four year terms. And the sizes of these houses range from twenty one to sixty seven members. About thirty five states do not have terms limits for maximum service. Roughly twenty two states have a simple majority vote requirement for all their measures. The remaining states have a hybrid system requiring both simple and supermajority votes for measures that are considered.

The Executive Branch

The Governor is the chief executive in all fifty states, and in two states the length of a gubernatorial term is two years. In the remaining states it is a four-year term. Roughly sixteen states do not have a maximum limit on the number of terms that a governor can serve, while the remaining states cap the number of terms to two. About half a dozen states do not have a Lieutenant Governor, while the remaining states do.

The Judicial Branch

All of the states have the Supreme Court as the highest court in the state. Most states have seven seats on their high court, with the lowest at five and the highest at nine. Four states have lifetime appointments while the remainder use six to fourteen year terms with a majority at eight years. And roughly twenty states have a mandatory retirement age. About twenty states elect their high court justices, while the remaining states are appointed to their office.

Thanks for taking a quick look at California and the other fifty states and their state governments. I hope you enjoyed this brief overview.