

them before the state's administrative agencies and courts.

MAJOR PROJECTS:

Enforcement. At the request of attorneys for the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), a Superior Court judge recently shut down the operations of Century Management Company (Century), a West Los Angeles auto subleasing business. The Department's pleadings alleged that Century solicited leased autos from the original lessees, often promising to free them from further obligation under their leases. According to the allegations, Century then subleased these autos to others (sublessees), charging a large down payment, inflated monthly payments, as well as inflated payments on insurance, the coverage of which is questionable.

Additionally, the court appointed Daniel M. Foley of Foley Accountancy in Tustin to unravel Century's subleasing transactions.

DCA Activities with PUC. The state Public Utilities Commission (PUC) requested that DCA staff review an application for PUC certification from a reseller of long distance services (Starcom, Inc.). The PUC must grant certification before any provider may legally operate in California. DCA staff reviewed the Starcom application and marketing plans, and concluded that certain marketing plans violate several provisions of California law. After evaluating DCA's opinion of Starcom's proposed marketing plan and operation, PUC denied Starcom's application.

The DCA's action on this issue has led to further PUC requests for Department participation in the certification process with respect to applications to sell long distance services in California. Moreover, the Department outlined the types of unfair business practices which may be anticipated in the long distance telephone industry, and advised the PUC of the need to scrutinize future applications in those areas.

Site Visits: DCA Director Marie Shibuya-Snell travels to both San Diego and Los Angeles every three months to meet with local groups to exchange information and bring them up-to-date on the DCA's present and future concerns. The DCA believes the quarterly meetings facilitate interaction among local groups, which results in better localized communications, cooperation and consolidation of consumer group efforts.

LITIGATION:

Omari v. National Security Financial

Services. The Department has intervened in a southern California lawsuit which challenges the business practices of an automobile subleasing firm, National Security Financial Services. The firm is alleged to have obtained and re-leased vehicles without following provisions contained in the original lease agreements and in a manner contrary to state law. Many of the vehicles re-leased by National Security were repossessed by the original leasing companies, damaging the credit rating of the original lessees and costing sublessees substantial out-of-pocket losses.

By intervening in the lawsuit pursuant to the Consumer Affairs Act of 1970, the Department hopes to obtain a ruling that this practice is unlawful, unfair, fraudulent, and contrary to state law.

ASSEMBLY OFFICE OF RESEARCH

*Director: Steve Thompson
(916) 445-1638*

Established in 1966, the Assembly Office of Research (AOR) brings together legislators, scholars, research experts and interested parties from within and outside the legislature to conduct extensive studies regarding problems facing the state.

Under the direction of the Assembly's bipartisan Committee on Policy Research, AOR investigates current state issues and publishes reports which include long-term policy recommendations. Such investigative projects often result in legislative action, usually in the form of bills.

AOR also processes research requests from Assemblymembers. Results of these short-term research projects are confidential unless the requesting legislators authorize their release.

Further information concerning AOR activities is available by contacting Pat Brawley, the coordinator of AOR's Legislative Reference Service.

MAJOR PROJECTS:

Bilingual Education: Learning English in California (June 1986) critiques the state's bilingual education program and has identified a number of problems. The report recommends policy initiatives involving program effectiveness and teacher qualifications, including the following:

- The state Department of Education should allocate resources to collect and evaluate data on various aspects of the bilingual program.

- Increased emphasis should be given to the "comprehensible language approach" currently used in some schools, as this approach appears to be working, and at a cost lower than other options.

- The Department of Education should conduct a thorough review of the state's secondary level bilingual program. AOR's report refers to the secondary program as the "weakest link" in California bilingual education, noting a problem of thinly-spread resources.

- A number of specific strategies should be employed to increase the pool of trained bilingual teachers in the state.

AOR's report observed that by the year 1990, California will need nearly 23,000 bilingual teachers. It concluded that at the current rate of recruitment and training, the state will not be able to meet this need.

Smoking Gun: The Case for Concealed Weapon Permit Reform (June 1986) is based on a survey of California's police chiefs and sheriffs regarding the issuance of concealed weapon permits. Under existing law, permits are required to carry a concealed handgun. Such permits are issued by nearly 500 authorities throughout the state, including local sheriffs and police chiefs. Criteria for issuance of the permits, however, appear to be vague, diverse, and inconsistently applied, according to AOR. While some jurisdictions issue permits liberally, others make it virtually impossible to obtain them. Strict local standards for permit issuance are undermined by such inconsistencies because even though permits are issued locally, they are generally valid statewide.

The AOR report concludes that "California's laws governing the carrying of firearms, particularly handguns, are inconsistently applied, poorly constructed and, in some areas, confusing to the point of incomprehensibility." The report recommends that the legislature review and revise these laws, and codify a simple, uniform set of firearm rules.

California 2000: A People in Transition (June 1986) focuses on major issues affecting human resources in the state. Among those areas of concern identified are preschool education, child care, teen parenting, teacher supply and quality, and long-term care of older Californians.

AOR recommends numerous methods of addressing the state's human resource needs, including the following:

- Expand preschool education programs to all economically disadvantaged three- and four-year-old children.

- Establish public/private partnerships



between schools and local businesses to take advantage of the teaching and information resources in the private sector.

- Upgrade the professional status of teachers by creating salary bonuses to discourage retirement of the best teachers; develop a career ladder which allows teachers to advance professionally in the classroom; and target the 167,000 credentialed teachers currently working in other professions for re-entry into teaching.

- Transfer all existing long-term care programs into the state Department of Aging.

- Establish a volunteer care bank of retired seniors to provide respite care or perform housekeeping and other chores for frail older persons. In return, these volunteers would earn credit toward their own future in-home needs.

SENATE OFFICE OF RESEARCH

Director: Elisabeth Kersten
(916) 445-1727

Established and directed by the Senate Committee on Rules, the Senate Office of Research (SOR) serves as the bipartisan, strategic research and planning unit for the Senate. SOR produces major policy reports, issue briefs, background information on legislation and, occasionally, sponsors symposia and conferences. Any Senator or Senate committee may request SOR's research, briefing and consulting services.

MAJOR PROJECTS:

The Chief Justice Donald R. Wright Memorial Symposium on the California Judiciary: Proceedings and Papers (September 1986) includes papers and testimony presented at the November, 1985 symposium, which focused on the balance between judicial independence and judicial accountability.

Symposium participants, including legal scholars, journalists and members of the judiciary, discussed the origins, standards, reporting and financing of judicial elections in California.

FUTURE PROJECTS:

A number of SOR reports are scheduled for publication in January and February of 1987, covering topics such as adolescent pregnancy/parenting programs, hunger, displaced homemakers, and child custody mediation. Several of these will be discussed in CRLR Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring 1987).

