California's Spanish-speaking population was a deeply disadvantaged minority, caught in a vicious cycle of undereducation and underemployment. Of the Mexican Americans employed in California, about half were semiskilled or skilled workers, including those in the entrepreneurial and professional fields, but within almost every occupational group the earnings of Mexican Americans were much lower than the average. The percentage of families with annual incomes below the official poverty level was nearly twice the percentage for families in general. The school dropout rate for Latino students was twice that of Anglo students, and more than half of all Latinos in the job market lacked a high school diploma. Many children had grown up in households where only Spanish was spoken. In 1976 the state legislature adopted the most ambitious bilingual education program in the nation to help schools begin to deal more effectively with the language problem. By 1980 about 330,000 students were enrolled in special bilingual and bicultural classes. Voters in 1986, however, passed an initiative that declared English to be California's official language. Twelve years later, voters approved an initiative prohibiting bilingual education and mandating instruction in the English language only.

Although Latinos outnumbered blacks in the state by more than two to one, Mexican Americans had great difficulty in gaining political representation. The election of Edward R. Roybal to the Los Angeles city council in 1949 broke a long tradition of Anglo exclusiveness, but during the two decades following his election to Congress in 1962, no other Mexican American served on the council. During the administration of Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Latinos were appointed in record numbers to the courts and state agencies but, by 1982, representation in the state legislature was limited to three senators and four members of the assembly.

Several factors contributed to the relative political weakness of the state's largest minority. Geographical diffusion of the Hispanic population drained off political strength, and in areas where their numbers were greatest, gerrymandering of election districts often prevented Latinos from exerting what strength they had. Anti-Latino prejudice remained a barrier. A disproportionate number of Hispanic judges, for instance, failed to win confirmation at the polls. Perhaps the biggest factor, however, was low voter participation by the Latino community.

In the 1980s a major effort was made to arouse the "sleeping giant" of Latino political power. Voter registration drives were aimed at increasing the Hispanic presence at the polls. Registered Latino voters numbered about 1 million, but 700,000 eligible voters remained unregistered. Political action groups also encouraged Latino immigrants to apply for naturalization. About one-third of the 2.5 million adult Latinos in California were noncitizens. The number of Hispanic officeholders grew slowly during the 1980s, but mainly on the local level. By 1986 there were 450 Hispanic elected officials in the state, including city council members Richard Alatorre of Los Angeles and Blanca Alvarado of San Jose. Latinos suffered setbacks in state politics with the unsuccessful campaign of Mario Obledo for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1982, and the 1986 defeat of Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso.

Illegal immigration of undocumented workers from Mexico continued to swell the Latino population in California and remained an unsolved problem for state and federal officials. By crossing the border, Mexican immigrants could instantly increase their earning power 10 times or more. In the face of this powerful motive, all

efforts to curb the flow of illegal immigrants proved ineffective. Estimates of the size of the illegal immigrant population in the state ranged from 750,000 to 1.5 million. Their impact on the state also remained unclear. Some studies indicated that the illegal aliens cost the state and federal government millions of dollars through their use of public services; other observers maintained that they contributed revenues far in excess of the cost of services they received. About 4 percent of the illegal aliens made claims on the welfare system in 1980, whereas nearly 75 percent paid income and social security taxes, and all paid sales taxes. In 1985 a Rand Corporation study termed "a myth" the belief that the large number of Mexican immigrants in California was hurting the state's economy. According to the Rand report, Mexican workers actually stimulated economic growth by keeping wage levels in the state competitive.

## Women

Although California had been one of the early states to grant women the vote, in 1911, California women were rarely successful in obtaining elective office. At first it appeared that it would be otherwise, for in 1918 four women were elected to the state assembly. Yet during the next 50 years, only 10 other women were elected to the lower house and none to the state senate. Women in the California congressional delegation usually numbered only one or two. As late as 1975, California ranked 48th among the states in the percentage of state elective offices held by women.

The nationwide women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s finally made itself felt in California state elections in 1976, when the number of women in the legislature doubled from three to six, including Rose A. Vuich of Dinuba, the first woman ever elected to the California senate. By 1992, 22 of the legislature's 120 members were women, the highest number in state history. Also, two women held statewide office—Secretary of State March Fong Eu and Treasurer Kathleen Brown—and Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer were elected to the United States Senate. By 2005, the number of women legislators had risen to 37, more than 30 percent of the combined membership of the state senate and assembly.

On the local level, the number of women elected to public office increased remarkably during the 1970s and 1980s. Dianne Feinstein was president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1978 when Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk were assassinated in their city hall offices. Feinstein was selected by her fellow supervisors to serve out the term of the slain mayor, and in 1979 she became the first woman to be elected the city's chief executive. The election attracted national attention because of the role of San Francisco's large homosexual population, estimated to constitute 20 percent of the city's electorate. Feinstein successfully appealed for support from homosexual voters, and the support they gave her was an important factor in her victory. San Jose city councilwoman Janet Gray Hayes became the first woman elected mayor of the state's fourth-largest city, and Anne Rudin was elected mayor of Sacramento. By 1986, women were in the majority on boards of supervisors in Fresno, Santa Clara, Riverside, and San Francisco counties.

The number of women who have served in high appointive positions in state government has been nearly as meager as that of women who have held elective