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HEADLINE: Maddy in a world of Hurtt;

The moderate state senator from Fresno is pushed aside in what promises to be a move toward increasing friction and factionalism in Sacramento.

BODY:

This week's vote by state Senate Republicans to replace Ken Maddy, a Fresno moderate, with Rob Hurtt, an Orange County conservative, as their caucus leader is more than a shift to the right within the party: It's likely to bring on a major change in the character of the institution itself and, with it, in the state's ability to reasonably manage its affairs.

Henceforth, the once polite and often club-like Senate is likely to look far more like the increasingly partisan and fractious Assembly, from which many of Hurtt's backers come.

The change began well before this week's vote to dump Maddy, who had been Senate minority leader since 1987. Maddy, always a strong representative of his district and the region around Fresno, is also widely known for his ability to work with members in both houses and on both sides of the aisle, and for his good relations with Gov. Pete Wilson. A few days earlier, Assembly Republicans had chosen Curt Pringle, who, like Hurtt, is a conservative from Garden Grove, over the more pragmatic Fred Aguiar as the leader of their caucus. Even among Senate Democrats, the replacement last year of David Roberti with Bill Lockyer, though hardly as pronounced, signaled a shift toward more contentious partisanship.

Hurtt says he expects to cooperate with Democrats, and he denied charges that he represents Pat Robertson or other elements of the religious right wing. An independently wealthy man, head of the very conservative Allied Business PAC, and the deep pockets for legislative Republicans, Hurtt has been willing to support Republican moderates in order to increase his party's legislative strength.

But there's no doubt that his election represents a sharp shift toward a more ideological and uncompromising position. When Lockyer, who will exploit the change for his own political purposes, charged Hurtt with being "anti-choice, anti-minority, anti-labor and homophobic," Hurtt responded that "those are just conservative values."

Maddy will remain in the Senate until his term ends in 1998 -- that's good news for those of us he represents -- but his pragmatic and thoughtful leadership in the Senate will be missed. One must hope that some of Maddy's moderation and willingness to compromise

will rub off on Hurtt in his new job, but for the Senate an era of comity and cooperation is almost certainly coming an end.