

Editorial: "Maddy Will Be Missed," San Francisco Chronicle, August 28, 1995.

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BODY:

THE DUMPING of Ken Maddy as Republican leader of the state Senate is both a personal defeat for one of the most respected and talented members of the Legislature and a public setback for Californians, who can now expect a meaner, more extreme and more harshly partisan form of politics than ever in Sacramento.

Throughout his two-decade career, Maddy, R-Fresno, has shown a commitment to public service in the finest sense. Moderate and pragmatic, he has been a vigorous advocate for his party's point of view, but also a leader who always understood the importance of bipartisanship in dealing with real-life problems.

By contrast, Senator Rob Hurtt, the Garden Grove right-winger who engineered Maddy's ouster, has displayed little interest or expertise in public policy, and has already made clear his primary focus will be purely partisan, as he works to fill the Legislature with those who agree with his own narrow point of view.

The leader of a small clique of wealthy Christian fundamentalists, Hurtt has risen rapidly to power, largely on the basis of his ability to donate and raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign money for candidates who share his agenda of restricting abortion and gay rights and weakening protections for workers, public schools and the environment.

It will be unfortunate if Hurtt's ascension leads his house, formerly marked by decorum and mutual respect, into the kind of bitter partisanship and sophomoric game-playing that has characterized the Assembly. Coupled with the recent election as Assembly GOP leader of Curtis Pringle, another Garden Grove Republican, Hurtt's move seems another symptom of a splintered political system, in which ideological extremists on both sides of the spectrum hold sway while the views of millions of moderate Californians go unrepresented.

Maddy is one who articulates such views, with intelligence, experience and sound judgment, and his decline in influence is a cause for sadness in the state.