Inventory of the John Seymour Papers, 1973-1991

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Inventory of the John Seymour Papers, 1973-1991

Identification Number: LP333

California State Archives
Office of the Secretary of State
Sacramento, California

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Descriptive Summary
Title: John Seymour Papers,
Date (inclusive): 1973-1991
Inventory: LP333
Creator: Seymour, John
Extent: 27 cubic feet
Repository: California State Archives
Sacramento, California


Physical location: California State Archives
Language: English.

Access
Collection is open for research. Use of one file concerning a student disciplinary case in the California Maritime Academy Files (LP333:528) is restricted under the Public Records Act, California Government Code, sec. 6254 (c).

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Acquisition Information
The California State Archives received a deed of gift from John Seymour.

Processing History
Processed by Lucy G. Barber

Biography
Senator John Seymour, Republican, was a State Senator from 1982 to 1990. He represented the 35th district that included most of Orange County.

Seymour was born in Chicago, Ill. on December 3, 1937. He attended the public schools in Mt. Lebanon, Penn., and later served in the United States Marine Corps, 1955-1959. He graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1962 with a degree in real estate and finance. After graduating, he worked in the real estate brokerage, property management, and escrow business, eventually creating his own company with his father. He served as president of California Association of Realtors, 1980. He and his wife Judy raised six children.

He served as the president of the Anaheim Chamber of Commerce, the chairman of the Board for Californians for Housing Coalition, and co-chairman of the Orange County Citizens for Water, and a director for the Anaheim YMCA.

He entered electoral politics with his successful campaign to join the Anaheim city council in 1974. He continued that service until 1978 when the people of Anaheim elected him mayor. He served two terms from 1978-1982. He was elected a member of the California Senate in 1982 in special election on May 13, 1982, held because of Senator John Briggs’s resignation. Seymour served in the California Senate from 1983 to 1990.

Seymour’s general effectiveness in the Senate was praised by the Los Angeles Times. In a scathing 1988 editorial, they described Sacramento as a “Fantasy Island of special interests and of elected officials who for the most part pursue the good life by night, campaign funds by day and public problems scarcely ever.” In contrast, Seymour was noted for “working issues on a bipartisan basis, focusing on solving problems rather than how the solutions will look to Democrats or Republicans.”

He played a leadership role in the Senate. In 1983, he, and several other conservative members of the Republican Party, took control of the Caucus in the Senate. Although a freshman in the Senate, he became chair of Senate Republican Caucus, replacing Senator Ken Maddy. He served until 1987 when he resigned that position.

According to the California Legislature at Sacramento (Handbooks), he served on the following committees:

Standing Committees
  * Vice Chair, 1985-1986, 1989-1990
- Education, 1982-1990
  * Vice Chair, 1983-1986
- Finance, 1983-1984
- Governmental Organization, 1982
- Housing and Urban Affairs, 1989-1990
- Natural Resources and Wildlife, 1983-1986
- Revenue and Taxation, 1985-1990
  * Vice Chair, 1987-1988
- Transportation, 1982-1990

Select Committees
- AIDS, 1987-1990
- Children and Youth, 1985-1990
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse, 1985-1986
  * Chair, 1985-1986
- Infant Child Care and Development, 1987-1990
Seymour had ambitions to serve in a statewide office. In 1987, he put his name forward to Governor Deukmejian as a possible replacement for Treasurer Jesse Unruh after his death. In 1990, he ran unsuccessfully for the Republican Party's nomination for Lieutenant Governor. Senator Seymour resigned from the California State Senate to serve in the United States Senate beginning January 7, 1991. He was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Senator Pete Wilson upon Wilson beginning his term as California Governor. Seymour served until November 10, 1992 when he lost to the Democratic candidate, Dianne Feinstein, in a special election.

He then returned to California where he served as the director of the California Housing Finance Agency from 1992 until January 1995. Subsequently, he moved back to Orange County and his roots in real estate. In 1996, he began serving as chief executive officer and a member of the board for the Southern California Housing Development Corporation, a non-profit affordable housing developer. He also is a consultant for Orange Coast Title. As of 2003, he continues to serve in both roles.

Scope and Content

The bill files provide ample evidence of Seymour's interest in improving education, transportation, housing, and the response to substance abuse. He pressed for improvements in highways and toll roads to relieve the congestion in Orange County. Some of these issues, especially transportation, came from his experience in local government. Others reflected his strong belief in improving education by setting minimum standards for all schools and increasing access to special education for students. The subject files provide documentation of Seymour's careful attention to issues of concern to his district, the state, and his political party. His attention to detail showed up in his careful use of form letters and special task forces to keep in touch with appropriate interest groups, constituents, and other elected officials. They also provide additional information on his interests in education, transportation, and housing. The budget files provide rich documentation of the difficulty of obtaining a balanced and timely budget for the state, especially in 1990. The drug and alcohol abuse subject files arise from Seymour's service on a series of Select Committees addressing drug and alcohol use in the State and resulted in a number of important bills being introduced by the Senator and others. The California Maritime Academy files are the result of a series of scandals about the management of the Academy in Vallejo. The various reports and correspondence give a strong sense of the educational and management process at this maritime training school and of the process of state investigation. The correspondence files, like the subject file, reflect Seymour's attention to concerns of his district, his constituents, and his party. Finally, all the series could help a researcher understand the dynamics of the California Republican Party between 1980 and 1990, especially the pivotal role of Orange County in that party.

Other Repositories

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been associated with these materials in the Archives' automated public access system.
Seymour, John
Special education - California
Drug Abuse - California
Transportation - Law and Legislation - California
California Maritime Academy
Series 1 Bill Files, 1983-1990 LP333:1-326

Physical Description: 327 file folders.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically by session and numerically by bill number.

Scope and Content Note

Senate Bill files created by Senator John Seymour generally are for bills he authored, and may contain drafts of legislation, analyses by committees and state agencies, comments by constituents or other interested parties, notes by Seymour and his staff, relevant background reports or newspaper articles, correspondence in support of or opposed to legislation, veto messages, notices from the legislative counsel about related bills and other miscellaneous materials. Assembly bill files for 1985-1986 may include his comments on the measures, his responses to constituents, and related correspondence.

The series represents the full range of Seymour's legislative priorities, but bills that were successful or particularly controversial provide the most complete records of his thinking, compromises, and political priorities. In 1983-1984, for example, he introduced SB407 that would have required a minimum grade point average for students to participate in extra-curricular activities, but eventually dropped the bill after receiving criticism from newspapers, parents, and other educational reformers. His support for the needs of the physically or developmentally disabled appears in many bills; for example, SB1832 (Stats. 1984, ch. 166), allocated state funds to match private grants obtained by independent living centers and SB2232 (1988 Stats., ch. 1292), among other provisions, created a Traumatic Brain Injury Fund to support research projects. His successful SB888 (1985 Stats., ch. 1474) which required juvenile sex offenders to registers with local police illustrated his commitment to stringent penalties for convicted juvenile offenders. Seymour also responded to the difficulties facing childcare providers seeking liability insurance in the late 1980s. His SB1474 proposed in 1985 would have created state insurance pool for certain providers; he withdrew the bill after the insurance industry decided to address the problem through a private joint pool. His leadership role in Drug and Alcohol Abuse committee led to a number of bills during most sessions: some of the successful ones included SB1960 (85-86) increased penalties for sale of certain drugs; and SB1365 (1987 Stats. 1041), increased penalties for Driving under the Influence infractions. The importance of affordable housing to Seymour personally and many Californians in the 1980s showed in a series of successful measures sponsored in the 1989-1990 session: SB1282 (1989 Stats., ch. 1451) clarified the affordable housing requirements for city planners and SB1287 (1989 Stats. Ch. 1155) required redevelopment agencies to replace all low-income housing that was destroyed in redevelopment projects within five years.

Series 2 Subject Files, 1973-1990 LP333:327-437

Physical Description: 110 file folders.

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Scope and Content Note
Include correspondence, reports, notes, and memorandums. Files provide insight into the range of Seymour's concerns and crucial political debates during his tenure. The interplay between local, state, and partisan issues appear in the group of files about education that address issues such as conditions at community college in his district and concerns about inequities in school funding that favor poorer district. Seymour's political strategies and close attention to constituent concerns come across in the group of files under "Seymour," which include form letters on a variety of issues, copies of his district newsletter, proposed and potential legislative initiatives, and requests for legal opinions from the legislative counsel or attorney general. Those interested in the re-confirmation battle in 1985 and 1986 over Supreme Court Justice Rose Bird will find useful Seymour's file since he was a leading advocate in the successful call for voters to remove her from the court because of her opposition to the death penalty.

A list of subject headings is available in Appendix A of the finding aid at the California State Archives.


Physical Description: 56 file folders.

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by year and then alphabetically by subject title.

Scope and Content Note
Includes general reports on budget; agendas and minutes from budget hearings by Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee and its subcommittees, the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and the Budget Conference Committee; requests for budget changes from agencies and analyses from the Department of Finance; request for special consideration of appropriations from Seymour to committees and the governor; similar requests from other legislators, citizens, and organization to Seymour; and Governor's messages on the budget. The files are particularly complete for 1990 when the State of California faced a severe budget deficit. During that period, Seymour served on the Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, its subcommittee #3 that dealt Health, Human Services, and Labor Budget issues, and the Conference Committee that resolved the differences between the Assembly and Senate's versions of the Budget. Included in the files for 1990 are a number of reports on the institutional problems of completing the budget process in a timely manner in California.

A list of headings is available in Appendix B of the finding aid at the California State Archives.

Series 4 Drug and Alcohol Abuse Subject Files, 1976-1990 LP333:494-523

Physical Description: 30 file folders.

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Scope and Content Note
Include reports, hearing transcripts, letters, notes, and memorandums. These files represent the Seymour's concern with issue arising from drug and alcohol abuse, which he addressed in part by leading Select Committee on Drug and Alcohol Abuse (1985-1986) and the Select Committee on Substance Abuse (1987-1990). These files contain the evidence that led Seymour to sponsor numerous bills. Particularly useful are those files related to drug testing (see also Seymour's bill files on SB2175, 1985-1986; SB1610 and SB1611 of 1986 and 1987).

A list of subject headings is available in Appendix C of the finding aid at the California State Archives.
Series 5 California Maritime Academy Files, 1987-1990 LP333:524-539

Physical Description: 16 file folders.

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Access Information
One file includes the records of a disciplinary case of a student in 1989 and its use is restricted under the California Public Records Act, Govt. Code, sec. 6254(c).

Scope and Content Note
Includes letters, reports, background notes, and a California Maritime Academy yearbook (1987). This file documents Senator Seymour's concern about the operations of the California Maritime Academy. Critics of the Academy alleged sexual harassment of students and employees, mismanagement of the institution by its administration, lack of oversight by the Board of Governors, and misuse of federal resources. One of the complaining students was a constituent of Senator Seymour. Files contain a variety of reports by a variety of individuals and institutions on the Academy and illustrate its attempts to integrate women and minorities into both its faculty and student body. A lengthy investigation by the United States Navy and given to William H. Dannemeyer, member House of Representatives, in 1989 explores the charges of misuse of federal resources. The investigations culminated for Senator Seymour in a hearing by the Select Committee on the Maritime Industry in 1990. A list of subject headings is available in Appendix D of the finding aid at the California State Archives.

Series 6 Correspondence, 1983-1990 LP333:540-548

Physical Description: 9 file folders.

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by date of material.

Scope and Content Note
Includes letters to Senator Seymour, his replies, and related background information. Much of the correspondence demonstrates Senator Seymour's attention to the needs of his district's businesses, governments, and residents. This series also provides further evidence of his concern over drug and alcohol abuse, real estate regulation, and child care. Files for 1984 reveal Seymour's involvement in both state and national Republican Party activities and the presidential election. A series of letters in May 1988 explain his resignation as chair of the Republican Caucus. The correspondence for 1990 includes his resignation letter after his appointment to the U.S. Senate.