

# Prison guards ready to weigh in on election

By **ANDY FURILLO**  
THE SACRAMENTO BEE

SACRAMENTO — One of the biggest battles in the gubernatorial campaign is heating up — and there's as much as \$5 million worth of TV time at stake.

The California Correctional Peace Officers Association, already a major force in state politics, is still working to schedule endorsement interviews with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Republican incumbent, and the Democratic challenger, state Treasurer Phil Angelides, but the union already has reserved the air time for the final two weeks of the campaign.

If the CCPOA devotes all \$5 million of the air time to a single gubernatorial candidate, it would dwarf the \$3 million it spent on behalf of Democrat Gray Davis in 1998 and 2002 and the \$1.5 million it spent on Republican Pete Wilson in 1990 and 1994.

CCPOA Vice President Chuck Alexander said the sessions likely will take place by the end of the month — amid contract negotiations now under way between the Schwarzenegger administration and the union. The CCPOA's executive board will then vote on whether to endorse anybody in the governor's race, with the announcement scheduled for the first week of September at the union's convention in Reno.

"We have to weigh our options," Alexander said. "We have an endorsement process, and we are going to absolutely follow that process, and we'll see what that process bears out."

The union's endorsement, and the millions in campaign money that goes with it, helped decide past gubernatorial campaigns. It helped Republican Wilson defeat his Democratic rivals, Dianne Feinstein and Kathleen Brown, in 1990 and 1994. Then, in 1998, the CCPOA switched parties and

propelled the since-recalled Gov. Davis to his victories over the Republicans he downed, former state Attorney General Dan Lungren in 1998 and Los Angeles businessman Bill Simon in 2002.

This year, the union's endorsement figures to have as much impact as ever. If Angelides gets the nod, it would go a long way toward shoring up the law-and-order credentials of a candidate with virtually no public record on the threshold issue of crime. If Schwarzenegger prevails, it would show that the governor has made peace with a once-bitter enemy.

Right now, the endorsement "is a jump ball" between the two candidates, according to GOP political consultant Wayne Johnson, which is exactly the way he thinks the union wants it.

"CCPOA is a major political player, and I think everybody just expects them to be involved on one side or the other," he said.

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