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Battles expected despite Schwarzenegger's hopes: Republican leaders are predicting a classic fight with the left on big issues

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Jan. 7--Despite Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's efforts to foster bipartisan cooperation, local Republican leaders predict battles over big issues in 2007.

In his inaugural address Schwarzenegger advocated the importance of not thinking about belonging to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party but the party of California.

"He didn't run as an independent, he ran as a Republican, and Republicans need to hold him responsible," Assemblyman Anthony Adams, R-Hesperia, said. "We need to make sure that not only do we need to be heard but that we have a seat at the table."

Adams said that one of the biggest issues is reducing the size of the deficit despite health care spending.

"We are absolutely going to butt heads on health care for illegal immigrants," he said. "Republicans believe that we need to first protect the citizens of this state and get those people insured before we try to be the answer to all illegal immigrants."

Adams said that the gover- nor needs the Republicans in order to pass the budget. "If he doesn't support us then we won't support him," he said.

Doug Johnson of the **Rose Institute** of State and Local Government said that the Republican legislator's job is more to control the damage than to push their own policies.

"I think the Republicans in Sacramento will continue to play defense, like they have been since 1996," said Johnson.

He said that bipartisan support is common of Democratic bills, but Democrats supporting a Republican bill is essentially unheard of.

State Sen. George Runner said that the biggest objective coming into this year is to move California to live within its means.

"It will be a classic battle where Democrats try to figure out how to increase revenue, which they normally do by increasing taxes," said Runner. "The governor had a budget last year that spent too much money. Now we have to figure out how to bring all that spending under control."

Runner has been good at getting Republican bills passed despite being in the minority. He said that the best thing to do is to find issues that can achieve good support on both sides of the aisle that benefit Californians.

"On the other hand, you have to be ready to go to the people of California," he said.

That is exactly what Runner did with Proposition 83, better known as Jessica's Law. It was originally voted down in the Legislature. Runner -- who coauthored the bill -- gathered over one million signatures to get it on the ballot as an initiative. Voters passed the proposition -- which strengthens restrictions against sex offenders -- with 77 percent of the vote.

For 2007 Runner has his eyes set on anti-gang legislation.

"They're tired of their streets being taken over by thugs," he said of Californians. "Public safety is out of step."

Runner said that it is something that he would take to the people if something was not done about the problem in the Legislature.

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