

Lawmakers propose dividing California in two



SACRAMENTO (AP) — Fifty years ago, it was the proposed state of Jefferson. In the 1970s, it was Alta California.

Now a group of disgruntled officials wants to create a new state of Northern California with plenty of redwoods, mountains, and water but relatively few people.

"The current form of government in California does not work for rural and suburban counties," Assemblyman Stan Statham, R-Redding, said at a Capitol news conference Monday.

Disgruntled northern reps asking for their own state

Statham, flanked by supervisors from five small northern California counties, asked all 58 counties to put an advisory question on the June 1992 ballot. His question: "Should California be divided into two states?"

If enough voters agree, he said he would sponsor a bill in the Legislature to make the split.

His proposal would have to be approved by the Legislature, which is dominated by southern California lawmakers who

would fear losing water from the north. The U.S. Congress would also have to approve the change.

Statham released a map that he stressed was only a proposal for a state of Northern California with 27 rural counties mostly north of Sacramento. His state would have a population of 2.2 million, out of California's 30 million, and an area of 55,000 square miles, about a third of the state.

The 27 counties are mostly rural ones with the largest cit-

ies being Santa Rosa with 112,000 people, Vallejo with 103,000, Redding with 65,000 and Napa with 56,000.

The state would include Lake Tahoe, the North Coast redwoods, the northern Sierra Nevada, the Trinity Alps, Lassen Peak and Mount Shasta and the huge reservoirs of Oroville Lake and Shasta Lake.

"It's time to admit the present system will never, never work in the best interests of rural California," Statham said. "Frankly, with California's population distribution, Northern California has no chance of

getting fair or equal representation."

There have been several previously unsuccessful proposals to divide California.

The latest was a 1978 bill by Sen. Barry Keene, D-Vallejo, that would have created an "Alta California" north of the Tehachapi Mountains. Southern Californians tried unsuccessfully to divide the state in 1852, 1859 and 1907 and northern Californians in 1941 and 1965.

The 1941 attempt was an effort to join several northern California counties with southern Oregon counterparts to form a new state to be called Jefferson.

Cottage Grove man found guilty on 19 abuse counts

EUGENE (AP) — A Cottage Grove man was convicted Monday on 19 counts of child abuse in a plea bargain that let him avoid a trial for injuries that left his 7-year-old daughter in a coma.

Philip Lee Kephart, 27, was to have gone on trial Thursday on charges of causing severe brain injuries to Stephanie Amber Moss. She is being cared for at a Eugene nursing home.

A stepdaughter, 9-year-old Amanda Courturier, also was injured in the beatings, which began in June 1989, and contin-

ued until Stephanie was hospitalized March 22 of this year, according to court records.

Amanda has been placed in foster care by the state Children's Services Division.

Lane County District Attorney Doug Harclerod said it was the worst case of child abuse he has seen in 17 years as a prosecutor.

In the plea agreement, Harclerod said prosecutors agreed to seek a prison term of no more than 50 years.

However, Harclerod reserved the option of bringing aggravated murder charges against Kephart if Stephanie dies from her injuries. Harclerod said he agreed not to seek the death penalty if a murder case arises.

Videotaped statements by Amanda and by Kephart's wife, Lisa Kephart, may be introduced as evidence during Kephart's sentencing Nov. 18, according to court records.

Harclerod said no decision has been made about whether to charge Lisa Kephart in any of the incidents.

Kephart was held in the Lane County Jail under \$320,000 security after his arrest March 25.

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 1. 東京本社: 1991年12月25日(木)まで
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