The Legacy of Arnold Schwarzenegger

By Richard M. Frank

A s Arnold Schwarzenegger prepares to leave office, many of his administration’s initiatives have been shelved, both major candidates in last month’s gubernatorial election are running on a course to distance themselves from Schwarzenegger, and his popularity rating has taken a steep downturn during the closing of the “Governor.”

But a strong case can be made that Schwarzenegger was in fact a remarkably successful governor, given the politics of the era and the state government and fiscal situation he inherited upon taking office in 2003. In more ways, he actually exceeded the expectations of his time politically. And it seems quite likely that history will treat Schwarzenegger more favorably than the public opinion polls and political pundits.

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cized accomplishments as governor involved stemming the environment. Schwarzenegger’s leadership in addressing climate change is particularly noteworthy, and is likely to be the restructuring of California’s environmental protection program, the implementation of major policies, and the state’s leadership in promoting renewable energy efforts has failed. The first was an open "political process" that allowed the state to make decisions on climate change, and the second was a balanced, bipartisan effort. This pattern of major political reforms was enabled by the administration’s efforts to restructure California’s energy system, including the state’s decision to implement comprehensive policies on climate change.

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