Anderson faces big fine over donations

Agency also cites Fresno GOP panel

By John Marelius and Michele Clock

The enforcement staff of California’s political watchdog agency yesterday recommended a $20,000 fine against Assemblyman Joel Anderson for violating campaign contribution laws.

After an investigation triggered by a report in The San Diego Union-Tribune, the staff of the Fair Political Practices Commission found that the La Mesa Republican accepted contributions in excess of the legal limit. The donations originated with supporters in his district who contributed money to the Fresno County Republican Central Committee, which donated similar amounts to Anderson within days.

A fine of $20,000 was recommended for the Fresno County GOP for its role in the transactions and for failing to properly transmit the reports to the FPPC.

Sempra wins suit over pact

$43 billion in power contracts signed during energy crisis

By Onell R. Seto

Sempra Energy yesterday won a lawsuit in which California officials hoped to get out of a $9.6 billion electricity contract signed during the 2000-01 energy crisis.

A San Diego Superior Court jury found that the 10-year deal allowed Sempra to buy cheap power outside California and sell it at a profit to the state. State officials maintained that the contract required Sempra to produce the power at its own plants, including one near Bakersfield that opened a year later than the state expected.

The verdict was a defeat to one of the state’s last challenges to $43 billion in power contracts with the Department of Water Resources signed during the height of the energy crisis. The 50 or so long-term deals stabilized prices and led to construction of the first power plants in a generation. But they saddled the state’s electric users with billions of dollars in higher rates.

That led the state to revisit the contracts. Many were renegotiated with lower rates, but Sempra rejected such a move.

"Once the Department of Water Resources received what they were hoping to achieve (with stable rates and new plants), they wanted to get out of the contract," said Sharon Cohen, Sempra Energy. SEMPR Energy, A6

OVERVIEW

Background: During the 2000-01 energy crisis, state officials signed expensive power agreements with Sempra Energy and other big power suppliers.