



## Sen. Michael Rubio resigns from California Legislature to work for Chevron

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Sen. Michael Rubio, right, wants to change a landmark 1970 state law

State Sen. Michael Rubio abruptly resigned Friday to accept a position managing California governmental affairs for Chevron Corp., saying a desire to spend more time with his family motivated his decision to step down.

Rubio, a moderate Democrat who has launched a high-profile quest to overhaul the state's environmental review laws, said he had "missed too many family dinners, bedtime stories and parent-teacher

conferences."

"I have realized that my current professional path has left little opportunity to be home for those who are most important to me, which is why I am making a change," he said in a statement.

While legislators routinely step down to take another public office or work in governmental relations after leaving the Capitol, it is rare for a sitting lawmaker to resign to take a job in the private sector.

The last legislator to give up a seat to take another job outside politics was Assemblyman Louis Caldera, who resigned in 1997 to join a nonprofit, according to Alex Vassar, a former Capitol aide who researches [California politics](#) as editor of OneVoter.org.

State law prohibits lawmakers from registering to lobby the Legislature for one year after leaving office. Rubio said his position as manager of the company's governmental affairs will not include direct lobbying.

Chevron described his role as "advancing the company's interests in California state politics and public policy, supervising a team of legislative and regulatory analysts and advocates in Sacramento."

Phillip Ung, policy advocate for California Common Cause, said Rubio's move illustrates some of the issues with the current "revolving door" rules for politicians.

"He's leaving the building with a whole list of contacts and inside juice on the motivations of legislators and ambitions of legislators," Ung said. "There's a premium obviously on the information that he has that doesn't really directly involve lobbying."

But Ung said he finds it "odd that Chevron would hire somebody with the skills that he has and not make him a direct advocate" eventually.

He also raised questions about the timing of the transition and whether the job talks could have influenced legislative policy for Rubio, who is regarded as an industry-friendly Democrat and received the maximum of \$7,800 in campaign contributions from Chevron.

Rubio said he decided to resign Friday morning, when conversations about a job offer "got to a point where they were real," to avoid conflicts. He downplayed the advantage his ties to the Legislature could give his new employers.

"My greatest asset is that I'll outwork anybody," he said. "It's been a privilege to serve in the Senate, and I look forward to working with those folks in the future."

Rubio's announcement, which came as a surprise to many in the Capitol, also affects some of the most talked-about issues and dynamics at play in the Legislature this year.

Senate Democrats temporarily lost their supermajority status when Rubio resigned Friday, though the ability to approve taxes or put measures on the ballot without GOP votes will almost certainly be restored when two other vacant seats are filled in upcoming special elections. Rubio's seat will be filled in a vote later this year.

There's also the question of how Rubio's departure will affect efforts to rewrite the state's environmental review laws. The Environmental Quality Committee chair has been working closely with Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, on draft language this year.

Gov. Jerry Brown suggested Rubio's resignation could complicate his effort to overhaul the state's signature environmental law.

"He's a good man," Brown said as he arrived in Washington, D.C., for a conference of the [National Governors Association](#). "I was kind of counting on him for this year."

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group's chief executive officer, Carl Guardino, co-chair of a coalition advocating for CEQA changes, said he remains confident the effort will move forward. He said Steinberg, who introduced framework legislation on the issue Friday, called him personally to reiterate his intent to work out an agreement.

Family considerations sidelined Rubio's plans to run for a competitive congressional district in 2012. The 35-year-old former Kern County supervisor dropped his campaign for the open seat to focus on a daughter with [Down syndrome](#).

Rubio said his wife and two daughters were the driving forces behind his latest decision as well.

His family began splitting time between Shafter and Sacramento last year, when they purchased a \$680,000 house in El Dorado Hills. The arrangement, intended to give him more time with his wife and children, also allowed his younger daughter to seek treatment for her developmental disabilities at the [University of California, Davis, MIND Institute](#).

But he said balancing family commitments and the demands of traveling to the district still proved difficult. Over the holidays, he decided to apply for the open job with Chevron.

"Even after that drastic of a move, it still wasn't working," he said in an interview. "When this opportunity presented itself, it was really a moment I wanted to seize."

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