

New California Supreme Court surprises analysts

By Maura Dolan, Los Angeles Times

When Gov. Jerry Brown's two latest nominees joined the California Supreme Court in January, legal analysts foresaw the creation of a more liberal majority.

The first test came in March, when the seven-member court had to decide whether to reconsider a death penalty case. Justices Mariano-Florentino Cuellar and Leondra R. Kruger provided two crucial votes to give the death row inmate another chance to argue that his sentence should be overturned.

But in a case involving a law that some judges said had been inspired by homophobia, Cuellar and Kruger were on different sides.

Although it is still too early to assess the impact of Brown's appointees, "it tells us they are not voting as a bloc," Santa Clara University Professor Gerald Uelman said.

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