

# Budget vote likely next week

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The State Assembly and Senate will vote next week - probably beginning Wednesday - on a budget plan that makes deep cuts to health, welfare and education programs, eliminates local redevelopment agencies and calls for a special election in June to ask voters for an extension of tax increases.

The plan, a combination of the budget proposals approved individually by the Assembly and Senate, was approved Thursday by a committee made up of lawmakers from both chambers. Committee Republicans voted against the plan.

State Sen. Gloria Negrete McLeod, D-Montclair, one of the committee members, said she hopes the plan will pass next week.

"If we don't (pass it), then I don't know where we start," she said. "Back to square one and (Gov.) Jerry Brown cutting \$26 billion."

Most of the spending plan can be approved with a simple majority in both the Assembly and Senate, meaning Democrats can pass the plan with no Republican votes. But one key provision - calling for the special June election - will require support from a few Republicans in both chambers.

Many Republicans see a vote for the June election as a vote for tax increases - something most Republicans have promised never to approve.

"I've made it very clear I'm not going to vote for any tax increases," said Assemblyman Paul Cook, R-Yucaipa. "Right now, I don't see anything to change my opinion."

Aside from the tax issues, the Legislature's budget lays out billions in cuts, most of them suggested in Brown's budget proposal.

Lawmakers went along with Brown's plan to eliminate local redevelopment agencies - a move county and city officials across the state have campaigned against - and to cut more than \$1 billion from the state's higher education system.

They also echoed Brown's request that recipients of Medi-Cal - the state's health insurance program for the poor and disabled - pay co-pays for medical care and prescriptions.

Lawmakers agreed with the governor's plan to eliminate state funding for Adult Day Health Care - a program that serves seniors and disabled Californians who need care or supervision during the day - though the Legislature's plan also calls for creating a similar but cheaper program.

The Legislature's plan, though, did deviate from Brown's plan in a few areas. For instance, Brown called for a 13 percent cut in grants from CalWORKs - the state's main welfare program - while the Legislature approved an 8 percent cut.

While Republicans on the joint budget committee didn't vote for the plan, Negrete McLeod said it was not an easy task for Democrats to approve of some cuts.

"I'm not crazy about lessening education funding, both in K-12 and through institutions of higher education," she said. "I'm not thrilled about lessening the hours for adult health care and developmental services. But if we don't cut, then where do we get the money from?"

Along with cuts, the budget plan calls for some funding shifts. Among the largest is one that would take \$1 billion from state and local First 5 commissions - agencies that use tobacco tax money to pay for infant and child services - to help pay for the Medi-Cal program.

It's not clear how much First 5 of San Bernardino County might have to give to the state if the plan is approved.

The budget plan also transfers money from other special state funds, including one set up to pay for mental health services.

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