

Brown's Countdown, Day 40: Democrats to pare back some of Brown's budget cuts

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The Assembly Budget Committee plans to approve much of Gov. Jerry Brown's budget today, but it will reject some of his most controversial cuts to social service and health programs, according to a document released Thursday by the committee.

In particular, Assembly Democrats will not eliminate welfare aid for children after a four-year time limit, and they plan to cut grants by 5 percent rather than 13 percent. They will, however, impose a four-year time cap for adults proposed by Brown.

As Senate Democrats did Wednesday, Assembly Democrats will reject Brown's proposal to cap doctor visits and prescription drugs for Medi-Cal patients. They will also reject Brown's plan to eliminate Adult Day Health Care.

Assembly Democrats will reject Brown proposals to reduce In-Home Supportive Services hours by 12 percent and eliminate pay for cleaning and cooking provided by those who live with their IHSS clients, typically relatives. They will agree to require IHSS recipients to obtain medical certification.

To replace the savings, Assembly Democrats will drop the reserve fund from \$1 billion to \$300 million.

They also plan to cut more money from Corrections, propose alternative IHSS changes and assume greater savings elsewhere in social service and health programs than Brown's Department of Finance projected.

For now, Assembly Democrats leave open the question on whether to eliminate redevelopment agencies. But they assume that redevelopment agencies will at least cut a deal to save the state \$1.7 billion and accept new restrictions on how those agencies spend money.

Both houses are gearing up for joint legislative budget committees starting next week, a typical precursor to closed-door negotiations and floor votes that ultimately decide the fate of the state's spending plan.

The Democratic governor wants lawmakers to approve the budget by March so that voters can decide in June whether to extend higher taxes for five years.

The Senate finished the second of three days' worth of Budget Committee hearings Thursday. Its committee approved a \$1 billion combined cut to the California State University and University of California systems, among other actions.

In a Senate budget hearing Wednesday, both parties approved \$1.5 billion of Brown's health care cuts, while Democrats rejected about \$200 million with promises to find other reductions or funding.

Senate Democrats approved cuts in Medi-Cal provider rates and mandatory copays for Medi-Cal patients, but they rejected limits on the number of doctor visits, caps on medical supplies and the elimination of children's vision coverage in Healthy Families.