

## Local effects of state budget changes

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Our city and county will feel the pain if Gov. Brown accomplishes his budget goals.

The governor is attempting to shift some programs to the county level, supposedly with the funding attached. Other ideas would cut funding to city services such as library and literacy programs.

Gov. Brown's idea is to change state government to put local officials in control of selected programs. Brown said the realignment would "allow government at all levels to focus on core functions and become more efficient and less expensive" by reducing duplication of services and costs.

There is support for local control of programs. Without the state share of administration costs, there are potential savings, but the funding must accompany those shifts from state to county or city levels.

Many programs are funded by the federal government and passed through the state, which subtracts its costs before passing the funds along to local agencies.

Gov. Brown is seeking waivers from the federal government regarding his plan to shift responsibility for some state programs to local agencies. Federal approval is needed for the governor's plans to cut Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program; cuts from in-home health care services; and cuts to funds for mental-health programs.

Some proposed Medi-Cal cuts would impact Alzheimer's patients, health of children under age 5, and a

10 percent reduction in payments to health care providers such as doctors and hospitals.

Cutting adult day health care programs would mean people caring for Alzheimer's patients would not be able to have a day of respite while the care was being provided by others.

Medi-Cal benefits of getting nutritional supplements would be cut. These vitamins could mean improving nutrition and preventing illnesses.

Another idea is to divert Prop. 10 tobacco tax reserves from health programs for children. Prop. 10 was an initiative approved by voters in 1998. It increased the tax on each pack of cigarettes by 50 cents, and established the California Children and Families Commission, also known as First 5.

The tobacco-tax revenue is used to fund early childhood health and education programs, with any unused funds rolled over to the next year.

Gov. Brown wants to tap into that accumulated \$2 billion in the reserves, taking 50 percent to fund Medi-Cal services for children under age 5. Since Prop. 10 was an initiative, it requires voter approval to make any changes.

Proposed programs to be taken over by counties are outpatient mental health treatment and psychiatric hospitals. Our county has only the 16-bed psychiatric health facility in Santa Barbara.

In-home supportive services provides care to individuals who need help but do not need institutional care. The grand jury did a report last year on the many people in our county who benefit from in-home care, without the high cost of being placed in a convalescent care facility.

Other services that could be turned over to counties are children's foster care and adoptions, and child-abuse prevention programs.

The governor's plan sounds good — eliminating duplication of services, removing state administrative costs, and local control. Santa Barbara County's budget is already strained just to keep up with current demands.

Santa Maria is cutting costs and has mandatory time off. This preserved jobs without layoffs, but means a pay cut for each employee.

The governor's plan requires the approval of voters. Another expensive special election is proposed for June. The last one cost our county around

\$1 million, with the state supposed to reimburse the county for the costs. The state is in trouble, but should those problems be passed to our local cities and counties?

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