



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Sacramento Legislative Office

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July 17, 2009

Board of Supervisors
GLORIA MOLINA
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Darrell Steinberg
Senate President pro Tempore
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Dennis Hollingsworth
Senate Republican Leader
State Capitol, Room 305
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Karen Bass
Assembly Speaker
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Sam Blakeslee
Assembly Republican Leader
State Capitol, Room 3104
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Reject Balancing the Budget with Cuts Only and Eliminate the 2/3 Vote Requirement on the Budget and Increasing Revenues

Dear Governor and Legislative Leaders:

As you consider options to bring the FY 2009-10 Budget into balance, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors urges you to take a balanced and equitable approach with regard to the proposals to be included in the package of solutions.

Limiting budget solutions to the program cuts suggested by the Governor would deprive millions of Californians basic health care, home care and other services that children, seniors and the disabled need for survival. Because counties in general, and this County in particular, have little discretion on spending—the Board has control over only 16.4 percent (about \$3.7 billion) out of the total LA County budget—the proposed cuts will likely affect public safety programs as well.

The above are reason enough to reject a cuts only approach, but the negative impacts on this County's economy, the economy of the entire State and the State's 38 million residents is further, compelling evidence to take a more balanced approach. Every dollar spent on the health, mental health, public safety and human services programs administered by counties is spent inside California. Those dollars are spent in local businesses throughout the County and

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throughout the State, and reductions of the magnitude being considered in the budget will inevitably trigger more layoffs and unemployment, increase the need for county services and drive the State further into recession.

The Board has noted that public opinion research conducted after the May 2009 Special Election showed that voters of all political backgrounds oppose the Governor's budget proposal—in fact, 65 percent believe that the budget crisis must be solved with a mixture of cuts and new taxes—not just cuts alone, as the Governor is proposing. Yet, a timely, “common sense” approach to balancing the State's budget that is acceptable to a majority of Californians is being thwarted by the two-thirds vote required for passage of the budget and enactment of new revenues.

The artificial and unreasonable constraint of the two-thirds vote not only distorts the will of the majority of Californians, it along with term limits, partisan redistricting and special interest financing of campaigns assures that it will remain virtually impossible for the Legislature to approve a balanced budget on time with nominal bipartisan support and without resorting to borrowing, accounting gimmicks, reductions in core services and escalating fees. Reducing the two-thirds vote requirement for the budget and increasing revenue is an appropriate, long-term budget reform and the debate on the two-thirds vote as well as the other issues mentioned above should be initiated as soon as possible.

Necessarily, modification of the two-thirds vote and the other constraints to timely, equitable and balanced budgets will take time. For the FY 2009-10 Budget, I respectfully request that you reject budget solutions which disproportionately shift the State's shortfall onto counties. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Wall

Cc: Members of the LA County Senate and Assembly Delegations
Susan Kennedy, Chief of Staff, Governor's Office
Mike Genest, Director, Dept. of Finance
Kathryn Dresslar, Chief of Staff, Senate President pro Tem
Bob Giovati, Chief of Staff, Senate Republican Leader
Nolice Edwards, Chief of Staff, Speaker's Office
Christine Robertson, Chief of Staff, Assembly Republican Leader
Craig Cornett, Fiscal Director, Senate President pro Tem
Seren Taylor, Director, Senate Republican Caucus
Chris Woods, Budget Director, Speaker's Office
Peter Schaafsma, Director, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office