



A Permanent Solution for California's Budget Crisis

The Budget Accountability Act will hold the Governor and Legislature more accountable to taxpayers in order to produce more responsible and timely State budgets. Here's how:

Hold Legislators accountable to pass a budget on time.

If the State Budget is not passed by the Constitutional deadline, the Governor and members of the Legislature will permanently forfeit their salary, per diem expense allowance, and car allowance for each day until the budget is adopted and signed into law.

Currently the Governor and the Legislature have almost six months to adopt a budget. The Legislature has not met their June 15 constitutional deadline since 1986. The Budget Accountability Act will hold our elected representatives accountable. If they are not doing their job then they shouldn't get paid.

Reform the budget process.

The vote required for the State Senate and Assembly to adopt the State budget and related tax legislation is reduced from 2/3rds to 55%. Currently, Rhode Island and Arkansas are the only other states to routinely require a vote of two-thirds or more to pass a budget. The 55% vote required by the Budget Accountability Act still requires broad consensus to pass the budget, but it will end the gridlock caused by our current system.

End political gridlock.

The Budget Accountability Act also provides the Legislative Ethics Committees of the Assembly and State Senate authority to censure party leaders, members of party caucuses, or individual legislators who punish or threaten to punish any legislator for casting a particular legislative vote.

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Californians for Budget Accountability - Yes on 56 - A coalition of the League of Women Voters of California, firefighters, educators, parents, healthcare workers, seniors, faculty members, and public and school employees. Major funding provided by California State Council of Service Employees Political Issues Committee and California Teachers Association Issues PAC.

In the current political atmosphere, legislators are threatened and punished if they do not follow the party line. The Budget Accountability Act allows legislators to vote their conscience.

They should be accountable to their constituents for their votes on the budget, not their party leadership.

Force the Legislature to make the budget its top priority.

If the State Budget is not passed by the Constitutional deadline, the Legislature is required to remain in session and is prohibited from acting on other legislation until the budget is adopted. An exception is made for legislation in response to an emergency declared by the Governor.

Passing a responsible budget on time is the Legislature's most important job, but right now legislators can work on other bills or even go on vacation while California's budget remains in limbo.

Give voters the facts about the budget.

The official voter pamphlet sent to voters each statewide election will be required to contain a summary explaining how the state spends the funds it receives and a website address where voters can go to find out how their legislators voted on the budget.

To hold politicians accountable, voters should know how their money is being spent and who is spending it.

Encourage fiscal responsibility.

The state is required to create a "rainy day" fund of 5% in years when revenues exceed the amount needed to fund existing service levels. Expenditures from the reserve could be made only when there is an economic downturn and revenues fall below existing program levels or for expenses related to a disaster declared by the Governor.

The current constitutional requirement establishes a "reasonable and necessary" prudent reserve, but no amount is specified. The Budget Accountability Act requires the Legislature to set aside a "rainy day" fund of at least 5% in good times to have a cushion so that extreme budget cuts and tax increases will be less likely in a weak economy.

To learn more about the Budget Accountability Act, please visit:
www.budgetaccountabilitynow.org.