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County Supervisors Meet with Governor, Look to Partner on Solutions that Minimize Harm to Residents

SACRAMENTO - County supervisors and officers with the California State Association of Counties met with Governor Schwarzenegger today, sharing with him their interest in working with him on structural change and long-term reform, and urging his Administration and the Legislature to find state budget solutions that minimize the impact to the residents whom counties and the state jointly serve.

Many of the current budget proposals to address the state's \$24.3 billion deficit would devastate counties' ability to provide vital services for residents. It's estimated that more than \$8 billion is at stake for counties with the current proposals on the table – a combination of cuts, borrowing, cost shifts and deferrals. Many counties are unsure how they will maintain service levels, especially at a time when demand for services has skyrocketed.

"Counties understand that we are partners with the state in the delivery of critical statewide services, and we want to work together to find a balanced approach to this unprecedented budget crisis," said Imperial County Supervisor and CSAC President Gary Wyatt. "We know difficult decisions need to be made and there are no easy answers. But counties cannot bear the brunt of cuts, cost shifts, borrowing and deferrals and still be expected to adequately provide services, especially as we grapple with our own significant deficits."

Kings County Supervisor and CSAC First Vice President Tony Oliveira and Riverside County Supervisor and CSAC Second Vice President John Tavaglione also joined the meeting with the Governor.

Among the key points addressed with the Governor:

- Counties recognize reductions in state programs may be necessary, but such reductions should be temporary since they would result in a shift of financial responsibility to counties that will cause an increase in demand for county services.
- Counties oppose the borrowing of Proposition 1A of 2004, which voters overwhelmingly supported to protect local government revenues.
- The \$1 billion annual loss to counties and cities of the local share of the gas tax will result in significant, statewide economic impacts and impair the safety needs of the transportation system. It's estimated that more than 3,900 jobs would be lost across county public works departments, with a ripple effect throughout the public and private sectors. The loss of gas tax revenues would further delay economic recovery.

- Counties are concerned about the potential transfer of new or additional program responsibilities to counties without a new, dedicated, statewide revenue source to accomplish the task. In addition, such a complicated transaction and realignment between levels of government would require adequate time for the mechanical and technical work necessary to assure programs work. This process cannot be accomplished overnight or in a matter of a few weeks.

“We appreciate the Governor taking our recommendations under consideration and engaging counties in this process,” Wyatt said. “It’s clear that counties and the state have mutual interests in serving the state’s 38 million residents, and we must do our best to minimize the impacts of the budget on their lives.”

While in Sacramento this week, CSAC officers also met with members of the Budget Conference Committee and other members of the Legislature.

The California State Association of Counties, headquartered in Sacramento, is the voice of California’s 58 counties at the state and federal level.

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