

## Attachments to the March 2011 Political Report



### The latest on California politics and government

March 9, 2011

#### [Jerry Brown asks Legislature to delay budget vote](#)

Gov. **Jerry Brown**, citing progress in his [budget negotiations](#) with Republicans, has asked the Senate and Assembly to delay voting Thursday so he can have more time to negotiate.

Senate President Pro Tem **Darrell Steinberg** said Tuesday that the Senate would put Brown's budget to a vote Thursday, Brown's self-imposed deadline, passing \$12.5 billion in cuts despite Republican resistance to tax extensions. But his office later said voting could be delayed if Brown's negotiations with Republicans improve, and Steinberg said this morning that he was watching to "see where his (Brown's) conversations with those folks go."

A source said Steinberg informed members of his caucus that Brown asked for more time and that a floor vote Thursday is unlikely. The Governor's Office confirmed that Brown had made that request.

Brown Press Secretary **Gil Duran** said the governor's talks had been "positive and productive. ... For this reason, he has asked the Pro Tem and the Speaker to temporarily delay any vote on the budget in order to allow more time to find common ground and to put the state's finances back in balance."

**Categories:** [Gov. Jerry Brown](#), [State budget](#)

Posted by [David Siders](#)

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Read more: <http://blogs.sacbee.com/capitolalertlatest/2011/03/jerry-brown-asks-legislature-t.html#ixzz1G9jdjiTY>

## **Contra Costa Times:**

# **Business leaders urge legislators to make a deal**

By Steven Harmon

Contra Costa Times

Posted: 03/08/2011 02:36:08 PM PST

Updated: 03/08/2011 07:51:35 PM PST

SACRAMENTO -- Carl Guardino, the president and chief executive officer of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, gave unqualified support to Gov. Jerry Brown's budget and tax extension plan Tuesday at the Capitol, urging legislators to quickly come to an agreement to close the \$26.6 billion deficit.

Guardino, SunPower CEO Tom Werner and Varian Medical Systems CEO Tim Guertin met with Brown at his office Tuesday. Later, Brown met with leaders of the Hispanic and Black chambers of commerce and the California Small Business Association as he continues to try to rally support among business leaders.

"What we're urging (legislators) to do is make a strong deal that's true to your principles but calls for compromise and consensus," Guardino said. "Silicon Valley knows the art of the deal. There is a deal here."

It was just the latest in a series of endorsements from business leaders for Brown's budget, which includes \$12.5 billion in spending reductions and a ballot measure asking voters for a five-year tax extension on purchases, income and vehicles.

Last week, the Bay Area Council announced its support, while the state Chamber of Commerce signaled it would provide campaign support to Republican legislators who vote to put the tax extensions on the ballot. Earlier, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce endorsed the plan, as have a number of smaller business groups.

Later this week, the state Chamber of Commerce's executive board will decide whether to fully endorse Brown's budget and tax extension.

A quick agreement will help small businesses plan for the future and add jobs to the economy, said Aubry Stone, president and CEO of the California Black Chamber of Commerce.

"We just want to move the agenda," Stone said. "If Republicans are the blockage, we're going to spend a large majority of our time sitting down with them and trying to convince them to do the right thing."

Brown is hoping that pressure being applied by business groups, natural allies of Republicans, will eventually pay off.

"Certainly, all of this helps," said Steve Glazer, Brown's political adviser.

But it's not clear that business support is having much impact yet. Brown's hopes of getting a budget deal through the Legislature this week were dealt a blow Monday when a Republicans who had been negotiating with him said their talks were at an impasse.

In a letter co-authored by Sens. Sam Blakeslee, R-San Luis Obispo; Anthony Cannella, R-Ceres; Tom Berryhill, R-Modesto; Bill Emmerson, R-Hemet; and Tom Harman, R-Huntington Beach, the legislators said Brown had either rejected or watered down their proposals so much that they couldn't continue for now.

Brown needs a deal cut as early as possible in March to allow for a June special election. He was targeting a June 7 to leave room for further budget negotiations in case voters reject the tax extension.

But some Republicans who are considering a compromise want to push back a possible deal until after the Republican state party convention, which is being held in Sacramento March 18-20. That way they would avoid any ugly face-to-face confrontations that might show up in a challenger's campaign ad. But it would push a special election to late June, giving little leeway for backup budget negotiations.

Both legislative chambers are scheduled to hold votes on the budget Thursday, though the two parties remain apart on key issues. Most Republicans are calling for an outright rejection of the tax extension, hopeful that they can force Democrats to balance the budget exclusively through spending reductions.

Senate Leader Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, and Assembly Speaker John Perez, D-Los Angeles, have said they are willing to consider reforms favored by Republicans. The question is to what degree they will offer reform concessions on top of the spending cuts they've already agreed to.

Guardino characterized the hourlong discussion at the governor's office as "fruitful," and praised Brown for bringing "such a cool head, thoughtful approach and experienced hand" to the Capitol.

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group group views the tax extensions as an "investment in the future while we're making painful cuts," Guardino said.

He said a strong economy and pro-business environment requires a quality K-12 system, a top-notch higher education system, a "strong and viable" transportation system, and a safety net that ensures support for the most vulnerable.

The proposed tax extensions "touch all of our lives and livelihoods in a way that's fair and based on what we can afford," Guardino added. "If it's important for California, then we should all have skin in this game."

Reach Steven Harmon at 916-441-2101. Follow him at [Twitter.com/ssharmon](https://twitter.com/ssharmon). Read the Political Blotter at [IBAbuzz.com/politics](http://IBAbuzz.com/politics).

## **Los Angeles Times:**

### **Jerry Brown courts business leaders to get behind his fiscal plans**

The governor hopes they will pressure GOP legislators to support his plan to place on the June ballot a tax extension he sees as vital to the state's economic survival.



California Gov. Jerry Brown talks about his state budget plan with reporters Thursday at Bob Hope Airport in Burbank. He later addressed the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times / February 10, 2011)

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By Anthony York and Marc Lifsher, Los Angeles Times

*February 11, 2011*

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Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) is taking his pitch for extended taxes directly to [Republicans'](#) deep-pocketed supporters: California's most influential business leaders.

In his first public event outside Sacramento since becoming governor, Brown told the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce on Thursday evening that his bid for billions in taxes is vital to the state's economic survival.

"The alternative is not good," Brown told the group, explaining that absent the taxes, state services will be cut deeply and painfully. "Help me and I'll help you."

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The speech capped several days of meetings with many of the state's top business figures, held in hopes that they will pressure Republican legislators to support Brown's proposal to place a tax extension before voters in June. First, the governor must persuade many of the same business groups that opposed him in last year's election to endorse his budget blueprint.

"I will try to first charm them, then inform them and then finally challenge them to rise above their predilections and their customary way of looking at things and pull together as Californians," Brown said before the speech.

He may, in the end, need to give a little too: GOP lawmakers have said they would like regulatory reforms, changes to the public pension system and limits on future state spending to be part of any final budget deal. Thus far, Brown has resisted. But he maintains that he is open to ideas from Republicans and their business allies.

Meanwhile, he has been lobbying largely behind closed doors. He attended a private lunch Thursday with a group he described as "some key Republicans ... in the business field." He added: "And I hope to earn their trust."

Brown's office refused to say who attended the lunch.

Brown said he also has spoken with the heads of some of the largest companies in the state, including [Cisco Systems](#) Chief Executive [John Chambers](#) and [Chevron](#) Chief Executive John Watson, and reached out to Republican groups such as the New Majority to ask for support.

On Wednesday, the governor invited 17 regional business leaders to meet in his Capitol office. Brown sat in on part of the meeting to make his case for the tax proposal and listen to ideas about how to solve the state's chronic budget problem and boost the sagging California economy.

Carl Guardino, executive director of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, was at the session in the governor's office. He said Brown asked the group to support a June ballot measure asking voters to agree to the tax extension. A top Brown aide, Nancy McFadden, asked the group directly to pressure Republican lawmakers to vote for it.

Politically speaking, this is not Brown's home turf. Most of the state's largest business groups, including the California Chamber of Commerce, actively supported his Republican opponent, [Meg Whitman](#), in last year's gubernatorial race.

But there are some signs that Brown's strategy might work. Alluding to a famous scene in the movie "[Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid](#)," when [Robert Redford](#) and [Paul Newman](#) jump off a cliff,

Guardino stressed that there's a need for business, labor, environmental and business groups "to make the leap together on tough budget cuts, necessary tax extensions and vital governance, budget, pension and regulatory reforms."

Guardino said his organization would be open to the ballot measure if it were coupled with budget and government reform proposals.

But Brown still must overcome strong opposition from conservative groups such as the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assn., which have stated their unequivocal opposition to his budget plan. The group holds considerable sway over GOP lawmakers, and Republicans are keenly aware that all of their fellow party members who voted for tax increases in 2009 lost elections for state office in 2010.

One of them is Mike Villines, the former leader of the Assembly's Republicans who lost his leadership post in the wake of his support for taxes in 2009 and lost a bid for insurance commissioner in 2010. Villines said support from the state Chamber of Commerce or other business groups could help give GOP lawmakers political cover to support the governor's plan.

"Having the business community involved does help Republicans," he said. "When they engage, it helps the politics and the policy discussion ... and that's a good thing."

There were signs this week that a compromise might eventually be possible. Assembly Republican leader Connie Conway of Tulare seemed to soften her stance against the governor's proposal after her caucus met with Brown on Wednesday in Sacramento.

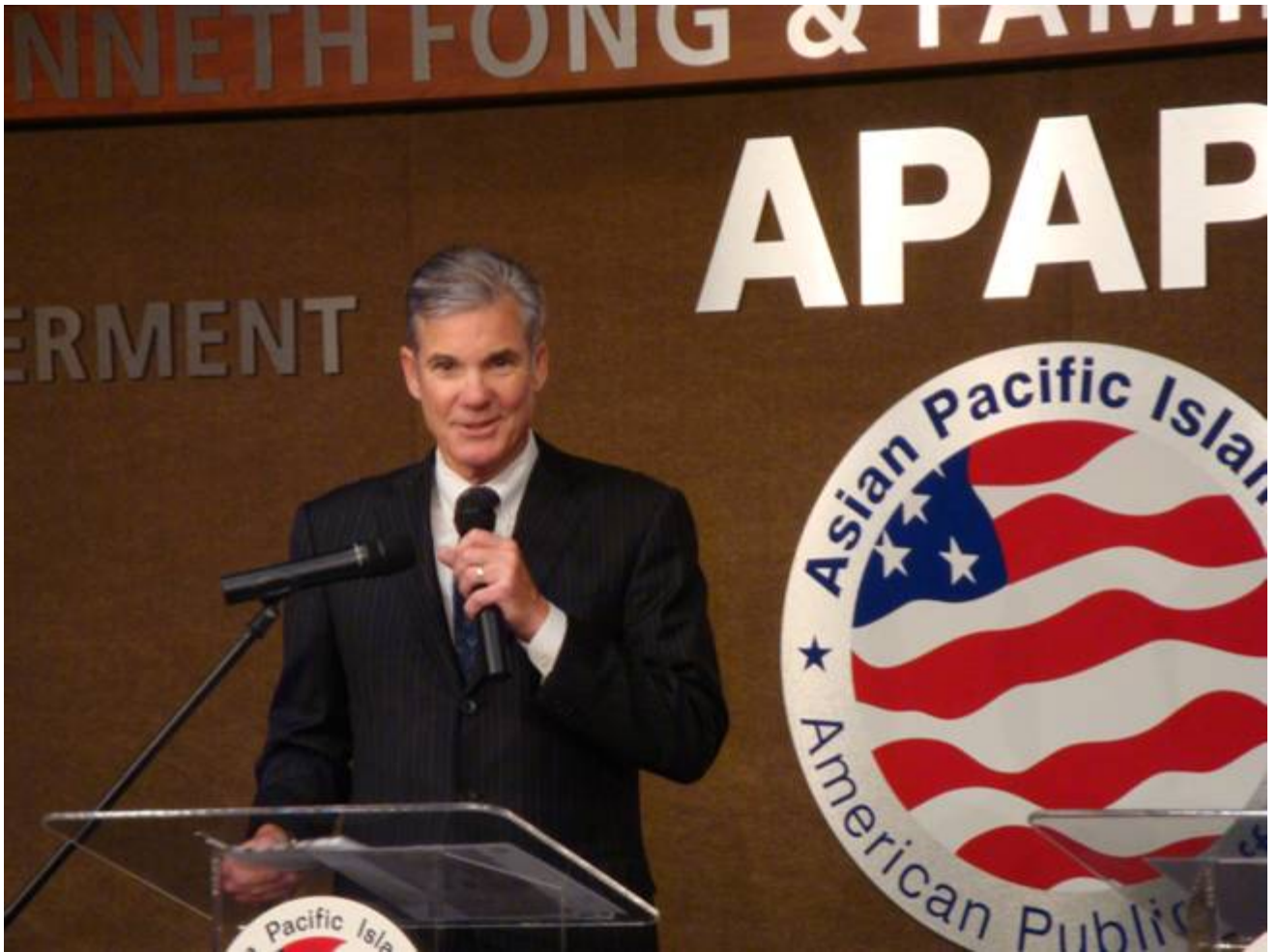
"We're not to a point that we're saying yes to putting something on the ballot yet," Conway said. "I think it might depend on what that ballot looks like."

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CTA Staff Report:

## Urging Support for Schools



Supt. of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson addresses the Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA) Community Education Foundation's bimonthly meeting in Sacramento on March 7. The superintendent said that supporting Gov. Jerry Brown's budget proposal and its proposed extension of temporary taxes is vital for California's public schools. Speaking to the group at its North Natomas headquarters, the superintendent reflected on his own experience as a teacher at a time schools even had funding for science field trips. When he began teaching, the superintendent recounted, California ranked fifth or higher in many measures of economic commitment to schools. Today, he noted, California is near to dead last in class sizes and has fallen sharply in terms of its international ranking of its schools.

The superintendent's keynote address preceded two others, one of which was delivered by Margaret Fortune, a former Schwarzenegger administration official who is now a CSU trustee and president of the Fortune School of Education.

Filed at 7:15 p.m. by Len Feldman  
(Photo by Len Feldman)

**Speaker: Two-thirds' Vote Is Only Option for Putting Tax Extension on the Ballot**



**Assembly Speaker John Perez tells members of the Sacramento Press Club that a tax extension measure will not be put on the ballot without a two-thirds majority vote in the Legislature. (Photo by Len Feldman).**

(SACRAMENTO, Ca.) 2 March 2011 – Assembly Speaker John Perez told more than 100 reporters and other members of the Sacramento Press Club during a Wednesday luncheon meeting that he sees no legal or viable option for putting the governor’s proposed tax extension on the ballot without a two-thirds’ vote of the legislature.

“There is not a single legitimate legal opinion” that concludes the tax extension measure can go to the ballot without a two-thirds vote, and that will require Republican votes, the Speaker said.

“Gov. Brown has proposed an honest budget...that has many difficult choices for us....The cuts are necessary given the financial constraints.” His proposal gives the “people of California the opportunity to weigh in. “

He emphasized that he is “not looking for a simple majority solution to put the tax extension measure on the ballot.” While the voter approved Proposition 25 allows the legislature to pass a

new budget on a simple majority vote, the Speaker said he is hopeful his Republican colleagues will not “abdicate” their responsibility and will work for and for vote a balanced budget.

The Speaker did express optimism about the likelihood of getting the votes necessary to put the measure before the voters: “I think we can get it qualified for the ballot and between now and then [March 10], and doing that is going to be my focus.”

He also said that philosophical and practical considerations would prevent a tax extension measure from being approved without a vote of the people: “I don’t think it’s any easier to get two Republicans to vote for a tax measure than for putting the issue on the ballot.”

In answer to a reporter’s query about whether changes in regulations and public pensions should be part of the mix, the Speaker said, “all options have to be on the table.”

At the same time, he underscored that he is “not challenging the governor” but is, instead’ supporting the governor’s pledge that “he won’t do it [extend the taxes] absent a vote of the people.”

Speaker Perez said he saw no “Big Five” leadership negotiations in the offing. Such meetings, he said, are at odds with his own position that the budget should be negotiated with transparency and in public. He also noted that Republican leaders have expressed an unwillingness to vote for any tax extension measure or ballot measure.

“As much as I disagree with my republican colleagues, I know the majority don’t want to run the state into the ground....I am hopeful that enough of them (Republicans) will look past the policy of fratricide.”

While the Speaker said he does not personally favor total elimination of redevelopment agencies, he does not as yet see any viable alternative that “doesn’t siphon money away from K-12 and other services at the local level.”

The Speaker closed by reiterating that he is optimistic about the chances of putting the tax extension measure on the ballot and getting voter approval for it. But he conceded he had learned to be optimistic while on his mother’s knee.

Filed at 1:55 p.m. by Len Feldman

## **Sacramento Bee:**

### **Editorial: Let voters make call on tax extension**

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Published: Sunday, Mar. 6, 2011 - 12:00 am | Page 6E

Republican lawmakers in California continue to insist they bear no responsibility in helping to solve the state's \$26.6 billion budget gap. It's a claim that is only slightly more credible than [Charlie Sheen's](#) commitment to clean living.

Taking responsibility for one's actions is elemental to any form of leadership. With only four days to go before Gov. Jerry Brown's 60-day deadline for the [budget deal](#), Californians are waiting and wondering if any leaders will emerge from the Republican ranks.

As GOP lawmakers know all too well, four of their votes are needed – two from each house – so Brown can put a measure on the June ballot asking voters if they want taxes to be extended. Voters should have that chance, and polls suggest they want it.

Yet Republicans *en masse* are refusing to let the electorate decide on how this historic budget catastrophe can be lessened.

It is not as if each GOP lawmaker has assessed the trade-offs and come to a personal decision to deny voters have this right. They are operating in lockstep. Far too many are following orders from [Grover Norquist](#), a Washington operative who has inserted himself into state budget battles nationwide by pressuring GOP lawmakers to sign no-tax pledge.

Here in California, the enforcer of the no-tax pledge is Republican Party vice chairman Jon Fleischman, publisher of the FlashReport. In a recent tweet, Fleischman said "it would be irresponsible for a GOP legislator to agree to put taxes on the ballot without assuming that the unions will pass them."

True, unions would likely put money into any ballot measure to extend [tax increases](#), but it would be up voters – not unions – to decide the fate of any tax extension. Why doesn't Fleischman want to let voters make this decision? Is he scared they don't share his desire to starve government, further harming public schools and higher education?

The tyranny of the minority continues to hold California's budget hostage, even after years of cutting and reduced state spending. If Republicans don't let voters decide on this most crucial of decisions, it won't be long before voters pass an initiative allowing tax measures to be passed on a majority vote.

And what of this year?

If Republicans don't allow voters to decide, the governor and lawmakers will be forced into four possible choices, ranging from the catastrophic to the tortuous.

- **An all-cuts budget.** Without a tax extension, Brown insists he would attempt to reduce the entire \$26.6 billion deficit through cuts, but we can't see how he could do that. We've played The Bee's "Budget Balancer" and see no way of cutting \$26.6 billion without closing at least one state university, reducing the public school year by months or letting dangerous criminals out of prison. Any and all would be unacceptable.
- **An all-gimmicks budget.** Although Brown says that all the tricks and gimmicks have been used up, we suspect there are a few left. There always are. But that would only "kick the can" down the road for another year, leaving the state's credit rating in the tank.
- **An end around.** Democrats would attempt to put a tax extension on the ballot through a majority vote. Legally risky and politically toxic, such a move would spark an epic court battle and potentially turn California into the next Wisconsin.

• **Impasse.** We've seen this before – a budget stalemate that drags out for months, harming state contractors and further damaging California's national and international standing.

Any of these outcomes would be devastating for a state that already is reeling. But if any of them occur, Republican lawmakers will help own it. They can't escape responsibility, any more than Charlie Sheen can.

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## Pensions emerge as key issue in budget talks

By Don Thompson

Associated Press

Posted: 03/06/2011 05:23:02 PM PST

Updated: 03/07/2011 05:33:32 AM PST

SACRAMENTO -- A partisan split on how to change California's massively underfunded pension systems is playing an increasingly prominent role in the debate over Gov. Jerry Brown's plan to fix the state's woeful budget.

Democrats, who control both houses of the Legislature, have scheduled votes this week on the plan, which balances deep spending cuts with an extension of tax hikes enacted two years ago.

Republicans so far have refused to support the tax extensions. They say the state must first make fundamental government reforms, led by restructuring a pension system filled with benefits that disappeared long ago for most the private sector.

"We have an unfunded pension liability of massive proportions, and we have got to get a handle on this pension crisis," Sen. Mimi Walters, R-Lake Forest, said.

Walters has introduced a series of bills. Her SB 520 would put new public employees into a 401(k)-type defined contribution retirement plan similar to that offered to most private-sector employees.

Walters' other bills would:

- Require pension plans to save for future retiree health care benefits.
- Prohibit state employees from increasing their pensions by buying extra years of service.

- End pensions for part-time, locally elected officials.
- Prohibit retroactive pension benefit increases.
- Increase the minimum retirement age to 55.
- Prohibit "pension spiking" by requiring that state employees' pensions be based on a three-year average salary before retirement.
- End collective bargaining for pension benefits by public employees, except bargaining on amount employees contribute to pension plans.

## Photo Story: CTA, CalSTRS Representatives Brief Legislative Staff about Retirement Issues



CTA's Liaison to the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) Maggie Ellis (at left) introduces two experts on the pension system during a March 3 briefing for legislators and legislative staff at the state Capitol. The event was sponsored by CTA, CFT, and CalSTRS.



(From 1.) CTA Retirement Advocate Jennifer Baker stresses that teachers' contributions to the pension system underpin CalSTRS. By the same token, the funds that CalSTRS invests within California and the United States help keep Americans working. CTA's Baker pointed out that 70% of CalSTRS members are women, and the median retirement age is 61.8 years, with the median years of teaching service prior to retirement amounting to 26.6 years.

# California Legislature

STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA



March 7, 2011

Governor Jerry Brown  
State Capitol, First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

We accepted your invitation to bring you our ideas on important structural reforms and willingly took to heart your admonition "to get out of our comfort zone". Although it is clear that you engaged in our conversations seriously, it appears we have reached an impasse in our discussions about how to move the state forward.

There is no doubt that you share our concern over the challenges facing California. In fact, during your successful gubernatorial campaign you argued for reforms similar to those we presented. We agree that Republicans and Democrats must put aside partisan differences if we have any hope of fixing the underlying structural problems that contribute to our chronic spending, budget and economic problems.

To that end, we thoughtfully presented our substantive reform proposals to create jobs, require responsible state spending, eliminate abusive pension practices, and implement meaningful governmental reforms. This menu of reform options was presented knowing that, although we probably could not expect to achieve all exactly as presented, each of these issues represent the tough medicine you've said our state needs. We were therefore disappointed to find that our reforms were either rejected or so watered down as to have no real effect on future spending or the economy. We have therefore concluded that you are unable to compel other stakeholders to accept real reform.

Sacramento must first prove that we are serious about correcting the excesses and dysfunction that has brought California to this moment. From our perspective, these proposals will restore our shared constituent's faith in government, return California to sound fiscal footing, create jobs, and strengthen our economy. It remains unclear why the defenders of the status quo will not support these common sense solutions.

We remain committed to engaging with you and hope to continue an open dialogue in our effort to balance California's budget and get Californians back to work.

Respectfully,

TOM BERRYHILL  
Senator, 14<sup>th</sup> District

SAM BLAKESLEE  
Senator, 15<sup>th</sup> District

ANTHONY CANNELLA  
Senator, 12<sup>th</sup> District

BILL EMMERSON  
Senator, 11<sup>th</sup> District

TOM HARMAN  
Senator, 13<sup>th</sup> District

## Educated Guess Blog:

# Brown's plan to abolish redevelopment gains support

## Education Coalition does end up supporting governor

Posted on 3/04/11 • Categorized as [Uncategorized](#)

By [John Fensterwald - Educated Guess](#)

Assembly Speaker John Perez and Sacramento insiders are saying that Gov. Jerry Brown now appears to have the votes in the Legislature to abolish redevelopment agencies, a plan that could bring school districts an extra \$1 billion a year, starting in July 2012, and then potentially a lot more over time.

Saying he has yet to see an alternative, Perez [told a press luncheon Wednesday](#), "It's a likelihood that we'll see action to eliminate redevelopment agencies." The proposal already had considerable support in the state Senate.

Extending temporary taxes and eliminating the state's 389 redevelopment agencies, which siphon \$5.7 billion in property taxes that would otherwise go to counties, cities, schools, and other state services, are essential to Brown's plan to address a \$26 billion budget deficit with a combination of cuts and revenue. He's had to counter fierce opposition from big-city mayors, including Perez's cousin, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and developers who have benefited from billions of dollars of construction projects funded by redevelopment agencies.

Brown has been able to win over Democrats with soft backing from the education community. More than 225 school boards have signed letters calling for the Legislature to put \$12 billion in tax extensions and revenue measures on the June ballot, according to Rick Pratt, assistant executive director of the California School Boards Association. But few school boards – maybe only one, Santa Ana Unified – have taken an outspoken position on ending redevelopment agencies, said Stephen Rhoads, a lobbyist with Strategic Education Services in Sacramento who has led the effort on this issue.

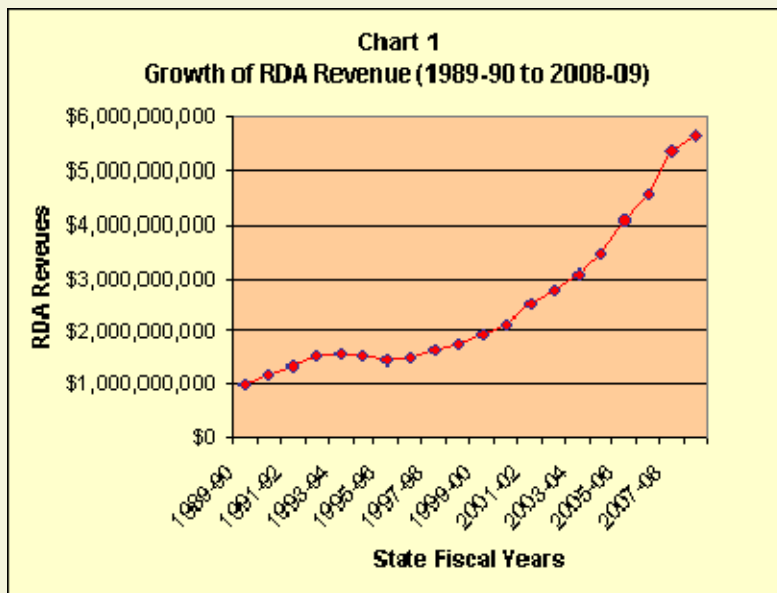
Some school boards have wimped out, backing away from taking on city councils and mayors, while at least one big district, San Diego Unified, has been doing a [side deal](#) while staying mum. Facing an estimated \$120 million deficit, the president of San Diego Unified has asked the city to advance \$64 million in future redevelopment funds.

Other school officials have been conflicted, recognizing the economic benefits of redevelopment, or have had trouble grasping how schools would benefit both short- and long-term. And no wonder: Redevelopment inner workings are abstruse, and agencies have been adept in hiding numbers. Plus, some school districts have worked out their own revenue agreements with local RDAs over the years and are worried about what would happen to the money, Pratt said.

But the California Teachers Association and other employee unions backed Brown, and two weeks ago its partners in the Education Coalition – the school boards association, the state PTA, and the Association of California School Administrators – signed a joint letter supporting Brown and “changes to law that will reduce drains on the state’s finances.” Since then they have been working the halls of the Legislature, Rhoads said. Helping their cause has been disclosures that redevelopment projects haven’t generated jobs that agencies have claimed or built low-income housing they’re legally bound to construct, and that they have subsidized high-paying city jobs and have expanded into areas that were never blighted.

How much money will end up in the state general fund is unclear. City councils in San Diego, San Jose, Los Angeles, and other places have rushed to approve projects that would commit unbonded money that Brown has banked on. On Thursday, the president of the League of California Cities [called Brown’s plan unconstitutional](#) and vowed to go to court to stop it.

Redevelopment agencies – nearly every city bigger than 50,000 has one – underwrite infrastructure improvements and commercial and residential projects, from stadiums to shopping centers. They then keep the additional property taxes that the new projects generate – money that otherwise would go to counties, cities, and schools. In 1988-89, redevelopment districts captured \$1 billion in property tax revenue. By 2008-09, that had mushroomed to \$5.7 billion (see graph).



Property tax revenues funding redevelopment agencies have grown from \$1 billion in 1988-89 to \$5.7 billion (courtesy of Stephen Rhoads).

School districts don’t lose their share of the money per se. Unlike money diverted from counties, special districts, and – to a smaller extent – cities, the state is obligated to backfill money lost to school districts because of redevelopment : \$3.2 billion in 2008-09. This money would otherwise have supplemented the general fund, for social services, higher education, and K-12 schools. Many legislators had no idea the loss to the state was this big.

Ending redevelopment agencies won’t immediately free up \$5.7 billion, however, because \$2 billion is committed to pay off bonds for projects that have been or are being built, and redevelopment agencies

have existing agreements passing along \$1 billion in property taxes to schools and local governments. That leaves \$1.7 billion that Brown is counting on to help balance next year's budget.

For one year, Brown would spend all of the money on Medi-Cal and trial courts. But starting in 2012-2013, school districts and community colleges would get 57 percent of the money – \$900 million for K-12 schools or about \$160 per child. (The amount would vary from county to county, depending on the size of the redevelopment agencies.) And this revenue would grow as properties increased in value.

Under Brown's proposal, this would be additional revenue for schools beyond Proposition 98. Over the next 20 years, as redevelopment debt declines, freeing up property tax revenue, schools would get even more money. In an earlier post, I projected the impact of this in Santa Clara County, on the assumption that only those school districts fortunate enough to have redevelopment projects in their boundaries would reap the benefits. However, there is a more equitable alternative: to divvy up the new revenue per student equally to all districts within a county. Those, like Rhoads, who have seen the latest draft language (I have not) say this is the way that the Brown administration is leaning.

Before there's a brawl over that money, the Legislature has to side with Brown and abolish the agencies.

## California Majority Report Blog:

Steven Maviglio

**Pension Coalition to Gov. Brown, Legislature: "California is Not Wisconsin"**

March 08, 2011 @ 5:25 PM



A broad coalition representing California's public employees sent a letter Tuesday to California Gov. Jerry Brown and members of the Legislature, urging them to protect retirement security for those who serve the public.

The letter from the Californians for Health Care and Retirement Security, which represents more than 1.5 million teachers, firefighters, school employees, police, engineers and other employees, reminds the governor and lawmakers, currently engaged in talks to try to fill California's gaping budget hole, of the concessions that state workers already have made to save state government \$400 million.

Here's the letter:

"For the past several budget cycles, California's public employees have agreed to concessions that have saved state government hundreds of millions of dollars. We have suffered personal financial uncertainty from furloughs and pink slips, compounded by the devastating effects of an economy wrecked by Wall Street. We serve the public for pay that sometimes pales in comparison to what

we might earn in the private sector. And the billions of dollars we spend in our local communities are vital to the economy.

We support your budget proposal and will continue to work with you and legislative leaders to help balance the state budget. But we implore you not to buy into the myths and falsehoods behind new efforts by some Republican lawmakers to undermine the state's collective bargaining process and deprive public service workers of retirement security.

A host of inaccuracies have cast a dark cloud over public pensions. Claims that pension costs will bankrupt state government are flat wrong; California's entire contribution to retirement for state employees is less than five percent of the state budget. Meanwhile, headlines blaring that pension plans are headed for Armageddon are unsubstantiated. CalPERS has earned back more than \$70 billion since the financial crisis and the System's funding status is estimated near 70 percent. The state of California pays less as a percentage of payroll for pensions today than it did in 1980.

Just as we have worked with lawmakers to help fill the state's gaping budget hole, we support reasonable approaches to clamp down on fraud and abuse in California's pension system. Yet let's be clear that less than one percent of retirees have pensions above \$100,000; the average CalPERS pension is about \$25,000 per year. Half of CalPERS retirees receive \$16,000 per year or less in benefits. Unlike the private sector, many public employees do not receive Social Security, making their pensions their sole source of retirement income, other than savings.

California public employees already pay 7 to 10 percent toward their pensions. We want to be able to focus on what matters most: Providing a fair and livable wage and retirement for the people who serve California. We respectfully ask that you consider these facts, and the gravity of the consequences of ill-conceived proposals to dismantle California's pension system. Doing so would be a mistake beyond comprehension not only to state workers, but to California's entire economy and every Californian that deserves a secure retirement."

## **Viewpoints: If public unions die, all workers will suffer**

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By Bruce Maiman

Special to The Bee

Published: Tuesday, Mar. 1, 2011 - 12:00 am | Page 9A

Do unions need to go away altogether for us to appreciate their value?

As a pitched battle rages in Wisconsin, California's public employees also face heavy fire, blamed for much of the state's protracted budget woes.

It's ridiculous to put all blame squarely on their shoulders. But if public employees don't speak out against the abuses of their own brothers and sisters, they will get an unfair share of the blame and unions will take another hit. And that won't be good for anyone, whether they're in a union or not.

"What's going on in Wisconsin is something that's going to have to be addressed everywhere," David Spady, California director for Americans for Prosperity, said during a radio interview recently.

"In many cases," he said, "unions have become the biggest obstacle to implementing reforms when governments are upside down financially."

That belief is why groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce argue that "unions have outlived their usefulness."

I'd expect that from capitalists whose bottom line is affected by all the things unions have fought for. Since laborers first struck against late-19th century robber barons, unions have made great strides on behalf of common American workers: better hours and pay, child-labor laws, safe working conditions, the right to collectively bargain.

But the middle class isn't making great strides anymore. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average taxpayer earned \$33,400 in 1988, when adjusted for inflation. In 2008, before the recession hit, it was \$33,000.

At the same time, the richest 1 percent saw their incomes jump 33 percent.

During that same period, the percentage of unionized American workers fell from 20 percent to below 8 percent (it's 12 percent when combined with unionized public employees). Today, workers' wages make up the lowest share of GDP since 1947.

I imagine the Chamber of Commerce finds that quite useful. The middle class, not so much.

Labor historians say it's because workers no longer have a strong voice, which is because unions are not as effective as they once were.

Well, if once-problematic unions are no longer making life miserable for private-sector management, why hasn't the private sector generated higher wages and more stable benefits for its workers?

"Instead of American workers asking why they find themselves in such a tenuous position, they see public-sector workers as just living off the fatted calf," Georgetown University professor Joseph McCartin, an expert in the history of public-sector unions, told me. "The way in which so many nongovernment workers have been suffering, you can go to those folks and say, 'Why are you paying for the pension of the guy down the street when you don't have one?'"

That's not the public unions' fault. It's the private sector that has failed private-sector workers, and it happened as their union representation shrank.

In the 30 years following World War II, as unions solidified, labor relations stabilized and public education systems established themselves, a growing middle class flourished, delivering a period

of prosperity unparalleled in American history. In the 30 years since, the nation's middle class has suffered a long, slow decline – as have unions.

But public unions, with costly pensions bleeding governments dry, have done little to endear themselves. They talk often about average employee retirements, but let's see them march in solidarity – to take one example – against the state's one-year rule. Enacted by lawmakers in 1990, it allows obscene pension-spiking, like San Ramon Fire Chief Craig Bowen, whose final salary of \$221,000 became an annual pension of \$284,000, and Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Peter Nowicki, whose final salary of \$185,000 became a pension of \$241,000.

Last year, a San Francisco County grand jury found roughly 900 city employees earning pensions of \$100,000 or more annually, based on 90 percent of their highest paycheck. Of 107 firefighters on the list, 71 received a raise of 10 percent or better in their last year of employment. How many other retired state workers earning six-figure pensions canoodled the rules in the same way?

No one should be angrier about these scams than the \$24,000-a-year public employee pensioner-to-be, because as the Little Hoover Commission points out, inaction will cost him or her, in "salary freezes, layoffs, increased payroll deductions."

"It drives my members nuts," Terry Brennand, California legislative advocate for the Service Employees International Union, said during the radio show. "It's manipulation of the system that shouldn't be allowed."

Lawmakers have tried. Last year, state Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto and Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco, submitted legislation to curtail these legal public loopholes, but then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed them, saying they didn't go far enough.

Well, if it angers union members and non-union workers, and lawmakers don't want it, and the guy who vetoed the law against it is gone, why is pension spiking still here? If we have far more principled rank-and-filers than fat-cat managers who game the system to retire on Easy Street, why is pension spiking still here?

I don't trust capitalists to preserve the protections unions have attained for American workers, but if public unions don't lead – at Wisconsin-level decibels – to cut through bureaucratic clutter and clean up abuse in their own house, people won't trust them, either. And unions will die. And we will all suffer as a result.

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## Pension rollbacks won't do much to balance budget

Published: February 28, 2011

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**By Brian Joseph of the Orange County Register**  
*For California Budget Watch*

SACRAMENTO—Talk of rolling back public employee pensions appears to be gaining momentum in Sacramento. Some lawmakers increasingly link budget negotiations to pension reform, and an independent state commission last week called for dramatic changes in the way California compensates its retired employees.

But anyone who hopes that reducing pension benefits will help balance next year's budget, or any budget in the near future, might be disappointed. California is facing a \$25.4 billion budget deficit right now, yet changes to the public employee pension system generally take years or even decades to produce significant savings.

“There are a lot of urban legends about the impact of pensions on the budget shortfall,” said Jean Ross, director of the California Budget Project, a nonpartisan think tank that focuses on issues affecting low-income Californians. “Any changes would be minimal over the next several years.”

Gov. Jerry Brown's 2011-12 budget plan proposes to spend \$5.87 billion, or 6.94 percent, of the state's general fund on pension costs, according to the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office. Pension costs, in other words, are expected to equal nearly a quarter of the budget deficit.

But while pensions represent a sizable portion of the proposed General Fund, reform would do next to nothing to reduce costs in 2011-12.

Even Republican lawmakers pushing the hardest for changes in the system estimate that if pension reform is included as part of Brown's budget proposal this year, costs will drop by just a couple hundred million dollars. That might reduce the deficit by 1 percent. Meanwhile, pension reforms enacted under Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last year — which lowered benefits for future employees and required thousands of current employees to contribute more towards their retirement — are thought to have saved the state just \$130 million this year.

Still, analysts and advocates say the lack of potential short-term savings is no reason to ignore the issue.

“A lot (of pension costs are) just locked in. ... (Reform is) not going to get us out of the current fiscal hole,” said Jack Pitney, government professor at Claremont McKenna College. “But in the long run, that's really where the problem for the state lies. And it's at every level of government.”

Indeed, pension costs loom large in the state's future. Numerous studies conclude that California is facing hundreds of billions of dollars in unfunded pension liabilities. Unless something is done to reduce the rising costs, California will eventually be buried by its debt to retired state workers.

Last week, the Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy issued a report describing the current pension system as "unsustainable." Benefits, the report said, have morphed over the years from providing retirement security to seeking "wealth accumulation." The commission called for reducing benefits to current and future employees and a cap on pensions for high-salary employees, among other changes.

California got into this mess in the late 1990s, when a booming economy sent the investment returns of the state's pension systems skyrocketing. Before the dot-com boom, pensions were funded by the government, its employees and investment returns. But when the money started piling up in the investment funds, state and local governments not only stopped paying their share of the costs, they increased the costs by upping retirement benefits.

Then the markets tanked, investment returns dried up, costs rose and suddenly state and local governments were on the hook for billions of dollars in unfunded pensions costs. As many have said, it's a perfect storm.

"When the dot-com boom was in its full glory, the state made expensive promises that it can no longer afford to keep," said Dan Pellissier, president of California Pension Reform and Schwarzenegger's former pension adviser. "The chickens have finally come home to roost."

And the situation may only be getting worse. Experts believe Brown's proposed budget furthers the state's pension problem by ignoring several big liabilities.

The California State Teachers Retirement System needs nearly \$4 billion annually on top of the \$1.35 billion budgeted by Brown this year in order to be fully funded in 30 years.

An independent report commissioned by the State Controller's office suggests retiree health liabilities are underfunded by \$1.3 billion to \$1.5 billion in Brown's budget.

The University of California system needs hundreds of millions of dollars, if not more, to fully fund its retirement system. And even when projecting rosy investment returns, the California Public Employees Retirement System is still planning to be underfunded by roughly 25 percent.

Brown's budget proposal ignores all of these items, which would add at least another \$5 billion to the state's budget. But these debts aren't going away. Eventually they're going to have to get paid.

"The longer you wait, the worse it's going to get," said Marcia Fritz, president of the California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility, a nonprofit dedicated to analyzing pension reform proposals. "I think it's the biggest financial issue facing all governments in the nation today," she said.

## Issue Background: Pensions

Public employees in California are eligible for what's known as a "defined benefit" retirement plan, which guarantees a specific payout at retirement, rather than a "defined contribution" plan, which guarantees the amount of money invested for retirement, like a 401K.

Pension benefits in California are calculated using an employees' years of service, age at retirement and final salary. A public safety worker with 25 years of service would typically qualify to receive 75 percent of his or her final salary in retirement. Retirees are also eligible for health, dental and other benefits funded in part by their former employer.

Last year, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger enacted several pension reforms. He rolled back pension benefits to pre-1999 levels for new hires; established that retirement rates will be based on the average of the three highest consecutive year salaries, instead of a single year; and got current employees to agree to contribute more towards their retirement.

Several additional reforms are being contemplated today. One idea is to incorporate more cost sharing into the existing defined benefit model. Currently, when costs go up, employee contributions are fixed. Under this model, if costs go up, say due to low investment returns, both the state and employee contributions would increase.

Another idea is to make the defined benefit programs less generous and combine them with a defined contribution account. Others call for outlawing retroactive benefit increases and requiring governments to pay pension costs as they accrue, with no exceptions.



## Key Observations of the Little Hoover Commission Report on Public Pensions

### REPORT IGNORES THE RECENT INVESTMENT RECOVERY OF PENSION ASSETS

- CalPERS investment portfolio has gained back \$70 billion since the financial crisis.
- Current assets stand at \$230 billion (as of February 28).
- The fund earned a 13.3 percent return on investments last fiscal year, and a 7.9 percent annual return for the last 20 years.

### RECOMMENDATION TO ALTER CURRENT PENSIONS IS CONTRARY TO THE CONSTITUTION

- The Little Hoover Commission Report correctly notes that California courts have recognized that public pensions are essentially contracts between the employers and their employees.
- For over 60 years, as the report acknowledges, the courts in this state have recognized that these contracts are protected from impairment by the California and United States constitutions.

### THE STATEMENT "PENSION COSTS WILL CRUSH GOVERNMENT" IS A GROSS EXAGGERATION

- CalPERS pension costs represented 1.8 percent of the State's \$87.2 billion general fund budget in FY 2009-10. In comparison, the cost of debt service amounted to 5.3 percent of the general fund budget in the same year
- For every pension dollar paid over the last 20 years, 64 cents comes from investments, 21 cents from employers, and 15 cents from members.

### REPORT IGNORES THAT PENSION REFORM IS ALREADY HAPPENING AND FAILS TO ACCOUNT FOR COST SAVINGS

- State employees are paying 2-5 percent more under new bargained agreements, saving the general fund \$300 million annually.
- Significant rollback of pension formulas for all new State hires and pensions are now being calculated using three-year final average compensation.

- More than 150 cities, counties and districts have reduced pensions for new hires, increased member contributions, or are in the process of doing one or both.
- Some 300 valuation estimates for reducing pensions for local governments have been processed.

#### PRESCRIBING AN 80% FUNDED STATUS AS THE LOW THRESHOLD OF A STABLE SYSTEM MISSES THE POINT

- A better measure of a pension fund's health is the steady progress toward a higher funded status level, not a snapshot in time.
- Understanding how a plan reached a funded level is more important than the absolute level.
- Nevertheless, Fitch Rating Agency recently stated that a 70 percent funded status or above is adequate and under 60 percent is weak.
- The report fails to show CalPERS funded status is rising; current estimate is nearing 70 percent funded based on market value of assets.

## Los Angeles Times: Wisconsin Assembly passes union proposal

By 53-42, the GOP-controlled Assembly approves a measure to sharply curb collective-bargaining rights for most public employees. The plan now goes to Gov. Scott Walker, who has said he will sign it. Democrats are expected to fight the plan in the courts.



Police drag a protester out of the Wisconsin Assembly chamber. (Carolos Javier Ortiz / EPA / March 10, 2011)

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By Ryan Haggerty and Michael Muskal, Los Angeles Times

*March 10, 2011 2:25 p.m.*

The Wisconsin Assembly on Thursday gave final approval to a GOP measure that sharply limits collective-bargaining rights for most public employees.

By 53-42, the Assembly passed the measure, an expected step after the state Senate OK'd the proposal Wednesday night despite a boycott by all 14 of the chamber's Democratic lawmakers. Democrats fled the state on Feb. 17, denying the Senate a quorum, but Republicans modified the bill so that a simple majority was sufficient to pass the plan proposed by Gov. Scott Walker and send it to the Assembly.

### [Photos: Protests at the Wisconsin Assembly](#)

The result was greeted by jeers from Democrats and the packed galleries. Protesters began to boo as soon as the vote was called, and many began screaming "shame" as the tally was announced. Chants and drum beats resumed inside the building.

Even though the outcome was expected, it didn't stop the fiery words that have monopolized Wisconsin politics for almost a month and have put the state solidly on the national political map. The battle between the Republican government and its public employee unions was viewed as a test case by the national union movement and by other financially pressed states seeking similar measures.

Tens of thousands of people have protested for more than three weeks outside and inside the Capitol. On Thursday morning, hundreds clogged hallways and some security checkpoints, forcing police to

clear the areas and to even shut down the Capitol for a time. The confrontations delayed the start of the Assembly's deliberations by about two hours with the outcome in the GOP-controlled body assured.

As a prayer was offered before the Assembly session began just after 12:30 p.m. local time, people in the gallery shouted, "Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker" at Assembly Speaker Jeff Fitzgerald, who had just finished talking. The shouts drowned out much of the prayer.

A few minutes later, Democratic Rep. Joe Parisi introduced Rev. Jesse Jackson, who received a standing ovation from protesters in the gallery. Jackson then led the Assembly in prayer, encouraging lawmakers to hold hands across the aisles in the chamber.

But that gesture was lost amid the muffled sounds of protesters' chants and drums that served as a discordant harmonic backdrop to the Assembly's deliberations. At one point, a man stood alone in the center of the Capitol's rotunda, leading people gathered in a circle around him and on balconies on the upper floors in a chant of, "This is what democracy looks like!"

As lawmakers spoke, the protests continued.

"Whose house? Our house!" the protesters chanted, before switching to "Recall Walker!"

Banners reading "Shame" and "Stop the attack on Wisconsin families" hung from balcony railings.

On the floor, the debate was less about the issues than about who should be politically blamed. Democrats and Republicans exchanged charges about who was trying to trick the other and who was engaged in political theater. There were calls from the Democrats for the Republican speaker to step aside.

The resolution to remove the speaker failed 57-37. There are 60 Republicans, 38 Democrats and one independent in the chamber.

After several hours, the Assembly acted and the measure now goes to Walker, who has said he will sign it. Democrats are expected to fight the plan in the courts and have started recall campaigns against some Republicans.

What began as a local dispute over how to balance the budget quickly escalated into a test of political wills last month. The fleeing of the Democratic state senators last month elevated the battle between the state and unionists into a national issue.

The Senate passed the modified measure, 18-1, on Wednesday night, sending the bill to the Assembly, which acted as anticipated. Throughout, Gov. Walker insisted that the anti-union measures were needed to help government in perilous times.

"The measure is really about reform," Walker said at a televised news conference on Thursday. "It is about giving local governments and state government the reforms they need to make government work better. It ultimately allows us the tools on state and local levels to balance our budgets, not just now but into the future."

After the vote, Walker issued a statement praising lawmakers.

"I applaud all members of the Assembly for showing up, debating the legislation and participating in democracy," Walker stated. "Their action will save jobs, protect taxpayers, reform government, and help balance the budget. Moving forward we will continue to focus on ensuring Wisconsin has a business climate that allows the private sector to create 250,000 new jobs."

Even with the modifications, the measure would sharply curb union bargaining rights for most public employees, except for police and fire. The bill prevents bargaining on health and pension benefits and limits talks to some aspects of pay. Unions would also be subject to recertification votes and the bill blocks most automatic deductions for union dues.

Walker has also called on the unions to pay more for their health insurance and for their pensions. The unions have said they are willing to pay the increased tab for benefits but have continued to fight the collective-bargaining issue.

Nor were the crowds placated by the GOP argument. Outside the Capitol, hundreds of people demanded to be allowed in as demonstrators with bullhorns led the crowd in chants of "Let us in" and "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Scott Walker's got to go!"

Jane Koenig, a teacher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said she is protesting because she is "totally against the whole bill."

"The basic right of collective bargaining is being stripped," said Koenig, 54, struggling to stay warm in bitter winds. "This is not about money. This is not about the budget."

The proposals have also incited protests across the United States and a sharp debate about the role of public employee unions in dealing with state shortfalls. Other Midwestern states are considering similar antiunion legislation, even though most polls show that a solid majority of Americans oppose efforts to limit bargaining rights.

The Democrats who fled remained in Illinois on Thursday and are considering their next steps. Petitions are already circulating to recall some GOP lawmakers.

"Eighteen Senate Republicans conspired to take government away from the people," said Minority Leader Sen. Mark Miller. "In 30 minutes, 18 state senators undid 50 years of civil rights in Wisconsin."

Democrats and their labor allies questioned whether the Senate's action was legal, and the issue was likely to head to the courts. Republicans defended their procedures.

"This legislation strikes a devastating blow to free speech and freedom of association, and will likely face challenges in the courts," said Stacy Harbaugh, of the American Civil Liberties Union in Madison. "In the meantime, the rights of protestors expressing their views about the legislation must be protected. The right to protest peacefully is the most basic tenet of a democratic society, and at the heart of the 1st Amendment."

The fight in Wisconsin was reflected on the national political scene as well. Republican governors have rallied to Walker's side, as have some potential presidential aspirants, such as former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Democrats, including President Obama, have questioned whether the measures that limit union power were needed.

On Thursday, White House press secretary Jay Carney again criticized the Wisconsin actions, saying that the president opposes using budget problems "to denigrate or vilify public sector employees."

Democratic governors also opposed Walker.

"Democratic governors are faced with the same challenges facing Republican governors like Scott Walker, but we understand that our primary goal should be bringing people together to create new jobs and opportunity now," said Gov. Martin O'Malley, the chairman of the Democratic Governors

Assn. "With their singular focus on settling old political scores at the expense of everything else, Republican governors are practicing the worst, Washington-style politics and only serving to prolong our nation's economic recession."

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## Statement from CTA President David A. Sanchez on Wisconsin

CTA STANDS IN SUPPORT OF EDUCATORS AND PUBLIC WORKERS IN WISCONSIN FIGHTING TO RETAIN RIGHT TO BARGAIN

Dina Martin, communications consultant, at 650-552-5491

Burlingame – David A. Sanchez, president of the 325,000-member California Teachers Association, released this statement today regarding the vote Wednesday evening by Wisconsin Republicans to ram through their bill attacking working families.

"The California Teachers Association applauds the Wisconsin teachers, the firefighters, the nurses and all public employees and working families who have continued to stand up to the outright attack on the middle class by Gov. Scott Walker and a Republican-dominated Senate. Last night's vote to strip educators of their bargaining rights revealed the true intentions of the governor, which had nothing to do with a budget crisis and everything to do with union busting, plain and simple. Although this is a setback for the working families of Wisconsin, the Senate's action has stirred millions of people nationwide who care about workers' rights and are willing to join us in the fight. CTA will continue to support our colleagues in Wisconsin and we will prevail."

### **Sacramento Bee:**

**Viewpoints: All labor has stake in Wisconsin standoff**

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By Harley Shaiken

Special to The Bee

Published: Tuesday, Mar. 8, 2011 - 12:00 am | Page 9A

[Harley Shaiken](#) is a professor at the [University of California](#), Berkeley, specializing in labor and the global economy.

Autoworkers sat down to win collective bargaining rights during a cold Flint winter in February 1937. For the last few weeks, 14 [Wisconsin](#) state senators have been sitting in motel rooms

somewhere in [Illinois](#) to preserve those rights for public workers. In both cases, thousands of supporters braved the cold in solidarity.

Flint was a watershed moment; [Wisconsin](#) could clearly become one. What are the stakes?

Despite the fact that the unions have agreed to all his financial demands, Gov. [Scott Walker](#) clearly would like to demolish collective bargaining and flatten public-sector unions. If this strategy succeeds, all workers – union and non-union alike – could pay a heavy price. Three reasons stand out.

First, collective bargaining isn't the problem, it is part of the solution. It was designed to bring labor and management together to resolve their differences.

Well, you might say, that's fine theoretically, but what about costly benefits and work rules? [New York's](#) Mayor [Michael Bloomberg](#) put it simply: "If contract terms or [labor laws](#) from years past no longer make sense, we the people should renegotiate – or legislate – changes" not abolish rights.

Underlying the anti-union assault is the unstated assumption that an employer is never biased, unfair or just plain wrong. What unions add is the perspective of workers and the balance that's vital to a healthy, productive workplace.

The standards set in the public sector – over half of all union members are employed there today – influence workplaces throughout the economy.

Some argue, however, that an inherent conflict exists between unions bargaining with people they helped elect. Strangely, these same critics ignore the fact that corporations already do just that, making deals with people they just helped elect. Throttling unions doesn't level the playing field; it simply provides exclusive access for business interests.

Overall, some states with collective bargaining are doing well right now, and some states without it are sinking. Montana Gov. [Brian Schweitzer](#) and unions collaborated on change, some of it painful, to benefit the state. In [California](#), Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) is working with unions to climb out of the fiscal quagmire, not seeking to pulverize them.

In the private sector, the [Ford Motor Co.](#) and the [United Auto Workers](#) have transformed a sputtering company into a global leader. Last year, Ford became the second most profitable automaker in the world, trailing only highly unionized Volkswagen.

Second, the ability to form a union is fundamental in any democratic society. President [Ronald Reagan](#) applauded this right in [Poland](#) 30 years ago, praising unions for providing "the right to work and reap the fruit's of one's labor, the right to assemble, the right to strike and the right to freedom of expression."

If it's good enough for [Poland](#), it ought to be good enough for us. The [First Amendment](#) provides rights to free speech and assembly in the community. Unions bring those rights to the workplace through collective bargaining.

As important, unions add balance in the electoral arena. They represent their members, to be sure, but they also speak for the middle class and the disadvantaged. Do we think that the minimum wage or the 40-hour week simply dropped out of thin air?

Throttling public-sector unions silences labor's voice. When Indiana Gov. [Mitch Daniels](#) jettisoned state collective bargaining six years ago, state union membership plummeted by 90 percent. Today, in the wake of the [U.S. Supreme Court's](#) Citizens United decision, corporations can shower unlimited contributions on the causes and candidates of their choice. If politics were a pinball machine, the tilt lights would be blinking.

Finally, unions provide dignity for those who work. Gov. Walker insists that civil service protections will still be available for state workers. There is no substitute, however, for elected representatives speaking for all workers as well as ensuring the rights of any individual.

The Rev. [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) journeyed to Memphis, Tenn., in his last days to march with city sanitation workers for recognition of their union and their collective bargaining rights. The workers wore buttons that said, "I Am a Man," and for King the struggle was for a moral right as well as economic justice.

Lisa Haberling, 35, a Wisconsin nurse's aide, told the Detroit Free Press that "these people are my snowplow drivers, city workers and my neighbors," adding, "These are the jobs that my children might want some day."

Unions are far from perfect, but then again so is democracy. Lisa Haberling's words remind us that unions and collective bargaining are vital for a public sector that serves the public and the democratic values we cherish.

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*Harley Shaiken is a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, specializing in labor and the global economy.*

• March 2, 2011, 1:00 PM ET

# WSJ/NBC Poll: Strong Support for Bargaining Rights

By [Patrick O'Connor](#)

Americans strongly oppose efforts to strip unionized government workers of their rights to collectively bargain, even as they want public employees to contribute more money to their retirement and health-care benefits, the latest Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll shows.

Eliminating collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers over health care, pensions or other benefits would be either "mostly unacceptable" or "totally unacceptable," 62% of those surveyed said. Only 33% support such limits.

The results don't bode well for Wisconsin's newly elected Republican governor, **Scott Walker**, who is locked in a standoff with statehouse Democrats and unionized state workers over these rights. Many of the Republicans gearing up to take on President **Barack Obama** in 2012 have seized on the budget battle in Wisconsin, a crucial swing state, as evidence the country wants to dramatically scale back government spending.



Protesters opposed to Gov. Scott Walker's measure to eliminate collective bargaining rights for many state workers gather at the Capitol in Madison, Wis. (AP Photo/Andy Manis)

The poll shows 68% of the respondents would like public employees to contribute more for their retirement benefits and 63% want these workers to pay more for their health care. Only 29% and 34% find these moves either "mostly" or "totally unacceptable." A clear majority, 58%, also find it acceptable to freeze government workers' salaries as governments get a handle on spending, whereas 40% think that would be unacceptable.

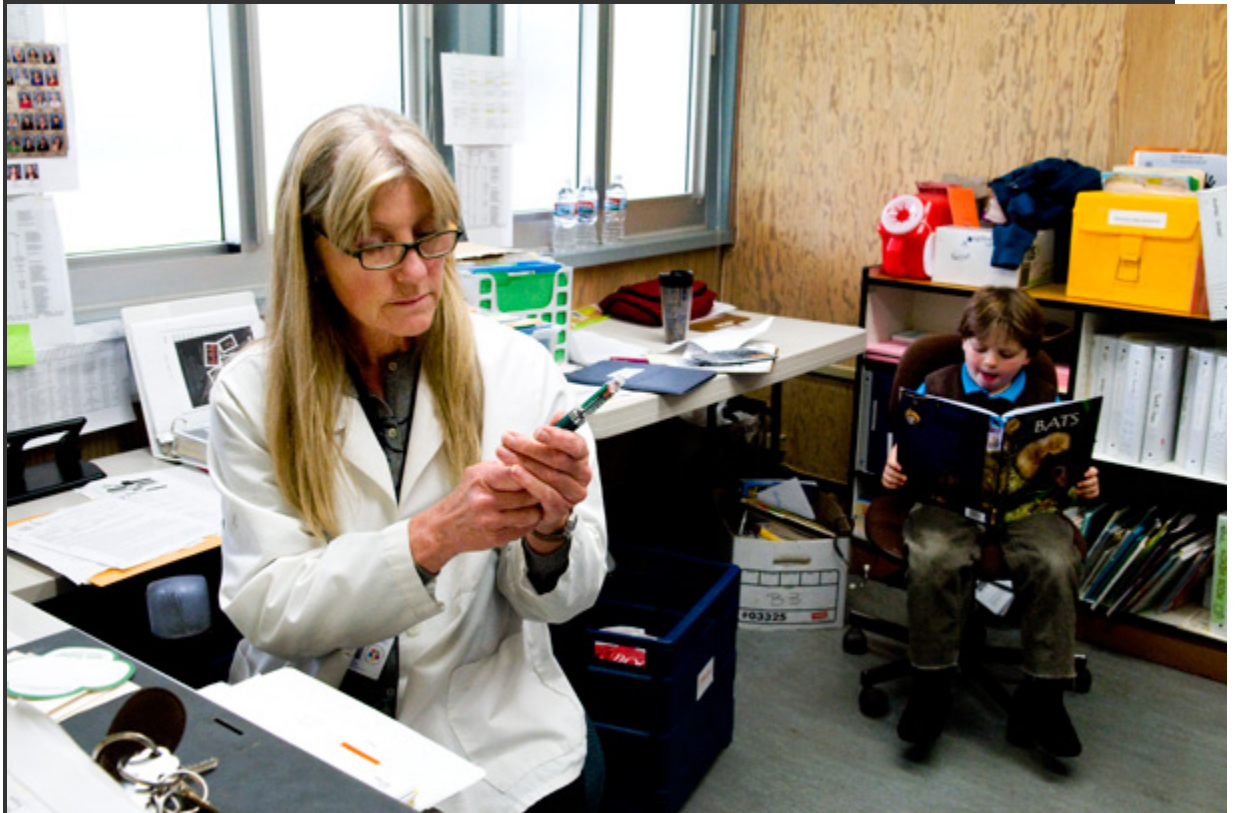
Similarly, 77% of the 1,000 adults interviewed for the poll think unionized state and municipal employees should have the same rights as those union members who work for private companies.

The poll, conducted by the polling organizations of **Peter D. Hart** and **Bill McInturff**, has a 3.1 percentage point margin of error. For the full poll results, check back with WSJ.com at 6:30 p.m. EST.

Voice of San Diego.com

The Endangered School Nurse

**La Jolla Elementary nurse Cheri Amati**



**Photo by Sam Hodgson**

La Jolla Elementary nurse Cheri Amati prepares a shot of insulin for Owen, a first grader with diabetes. The school's nurse will be cut next year, and it will instead rely on a group of roving nurses.



Photo by Sam Hodgson Owen waits in the nurse's office for his insulin shot.

## **From the Reporter**

### **Why I Chose This Story**

Week after week, I've heard nurses pleading to the school board to protect kids by sparing their jobs. But I wanted to dig in and understand what the nursing cuts would mean.

### **What I Found Most Interesting**

The district is trying to blunt the cuts to nurses who work on site at schools by expanding a pool of traveling nurses. Nurses fear it will still make it harder to detect health problems in advance.

### **What I'm Watching For**

Even nursing staff say they aren't totally sure how the traveling pool will work. I want to keep an eye on the plans to see how well schools will be covered.

Posted: Tuesday, March 8, 2011 8:30 pm | Updated: 9:06 pm, Tue Mar 8, 2011.

### **[The Endangered School Nurse](#)**

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by **[Emily Alpert](#)**

Six-year-old Owen chortled with glee as he flung a rubber chicken up into the air on a parachute, sending it to the ceiling. Gym class had gone inside on a rainy day. His round cheeks grew pink as he ran.

But a giddy romp before lunchtime can be dangerous for Owen, a diabetic first grader whose blood sugar can careen from too high to too low. Too low and he could fall into a coma; too high and he could damage his eyes and risk blindness later in life. Health technician Dee Cundiff has to sit him down during gym class for a juice box to keep him from crashing, has to eye exactly how many apple slices he eats at lunch.

It falls to nurse Cheri Amati to give him his insulin. All of this is scary enough for the people who love Owen. But his mom and dad were terrified when they heard that nurse could disappear next year.

"Who is supposed to take care of all this?" asked Dana McCarter, his mother.

Forced to figure out how to gut their own budgets to close an estimated \$120 million deficit, principals across San Diego Unified planned to slash half of the nurses who are stationed at their schools and a fourth of the health technicians, who care for students but don't have nursing degrees. Doing so would save roughly \$3.8 million.

San Diego Unified tentatively plans to expand an existing [pool of traveling nurses](#) to cover more schools, but nobody is exactly sure how often those nurses will be able to stop by. More than 40 out of roughly 140 nurses in the school district could be warned this week that their jobs are on the line.

La Jolla Elementary currently has a nurse just two days a week and already relies heavily on traveling nurses to give Owen his insulin. Next year it will rely on them entirely, with no nurse on campus. The health technician could disappear too; Principal Donna Tripi hopes to get the school district to cover her.

Owen goes to school in a wealthy area with less dramatic needs than poorer neighborhoods across town. But even here, "they're going to have their hands full," said Cheri Amati, the school nurse.

Children can still get medical attention when there is no nurse on site. Health technicians like Cundiff who are trained in first aid and CPR can patch up scrapes, help diabetic kids count carbohydrates and carry out other everyday tasks. Traveling nurses can give insulin injections, conduct hearing and vision screenings and do other tasks. Someone will still come to give Owen his shot.

But nurses and parents fear the budget cuts will make schools slower to sniff out health problems and less nimble in treating them. Nurses say when they float, they find it harder to know the kids and detect problems before they explode. It will only get harder if they have to juggle more schools next year. Health technicians cannot perform all of the same tasks and duties — and they're under the knife too.

"You can only spread us so thin," said Jennifer Gorman, who oversees nursing in San Diego Unified. She added, "I don't think it's going to be as safe."

The cuts would leave San Diego Unified with roughly one nurse for every 1,000 kids, according to Gorman's estimates. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends one nurse for every 750 students — and that is just for children who are well. The teachers union is fighting the cuts, saying they run afoul of new rules in their contract that set minimum staffing for nurses.

Parents are already frustrated with dealing with different nurses on different days. Owen sees up to five nurses in a week. His father, John Reed, once left work to pick Owen up, panicked that a substitute nurse wanted to give him more insulin than usual. Reed loves all the nurses; he just wishes there weren't so many.

"They say, 'Hey, this is what the doctor's orders say.' Well, we get the orders changed all the time," Reed said. (Nurse Amati said they had to communicate with Owen's doctors six times in roughly three weeks.) "This disease is really slippery. It's important to have people who are familiar with us."



During gym class, Owen throws a rubber chicken in the air with a colorful parachute. He loves playing, but it can push his sugar to dangerous levels and is monitored by the school's health technician. | Photo by Sam Hodgson. *Click on the image to enlarge.*

Traveling nurses such as Sue de Lira already hopscotch between up to six schools in a day, injecting insulin, screening kids for scoliosis, sitting in on meetings for students with disabilities, and anything else that pops up at schools without nurses. California courts are still battling over who can give insulin to schoolchildren; San Diego Unified only allows nurses to do so. So, much of her schedule is insulin.

"We're in and out," de Lira said. She stops by Silver Gate Elementary in Point Loma for just 15 minutes to help a little girl with insulin; later she comes back to give the same girl another shot.

The schedule is no less hectic for Kathy Ryan, an on-site nurse at Lincoln High School, who sees between 40 and 60 students every day with problems from headaches to severe issues like rape. But staying at one school means she can spot problems herself, instead of waiting for a school to call. She once sized up a girl who came to her office asking for a sanitary pad and realized the girl was actually giving birth.



After determining his blood sugar is low, the school's health tech, Dee Cundiff, has him drink a fruit punch box. Her position is also in jeopardy with San Diego Unified's budget cuts. | Photo by Sam Hodgson. *Click on the image to enlarge.*

Nurses argue that that particular skill — making a judgment call on a medical issue — is what separates school nurses from less expensive health technicians who don't have nursing degrees. Those tough calls have become more important as schools enroll more students with severe medical problems. Children who once wouldn't have survived past toddlerhood are now in classrooms and on the playground.

"I could teach you how to give an injection," said Linda Davis-Alldritt, who handles nursing issues for the California Department of Education. "But I couldn't teach you in a day how to assess that person to make sure they need that injection."

Short on nurses, schools may be quicker to call 911 or send kids home when they don't need to and slower to offer other help, Gorman said. Principals fear they could get sued if someone errs when giving a child medication, said Jeannie Steeg, executive director of the principals union.

On the flip side, advocates for diabetic students, who argue any trained staffer should be able to give insulin, fear schools will hold back care or make parents come give insulin when nurses aren't around.

"There's no way there's sufficient nurses to do this alone," said Robert Henry, a University of California, San Diego professor and president of medicine and science for the American Diabetes Association. Besides, he adds, "you can't really schedule these things."

Nursing has long been thin in California schools compared to other states: The state ranks 42nd in its student-to-nurse ratio, with more than 2,100 children per nurse, according to the National Association of School Nurses. The California Department of Education says almost half of California schools have no nurses at all.

The school board will vote Thursday on whether to send layoff warnings to nurses and other employees. Several school board members have said they don't like the idea of paring back on nursing. But sparing the nurses would mean cutting something else.

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Owen licks a drop of blood off his finger after pricking it to test his blood sugar level. | Photo by Sam Hodgson. *Click on the image to enlarge.*

New York Times:  
**Tight Budgets Mean Squeeze in Classrooms**



Jonathan Alcorn for The New York Times

A world history class at a high school in Los Angeles, which has been increasing class sizes.

By [SAM DILLON](#)

Published: March 6, 2011

Millions of public school students across the nation are seeing their class sizes swell because of budget cuts and teacher layoffs, undermining a decades-long push by parents, administrators and policy makers to shrink class sizes.

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Jonathan Alcorn for The New York Times

**Budget cuts have led to more crowded classes.**

Over the past two years, California, Georgia, Nevada, Ohio, Utah and Wisconsin have loosened legal restrictions on class size. And Idaho and Texas are debating whether to fit more students in classrooms.

Los Angeles has increased the average size of its ninth-grade English and math classes to 34 from 20. Eleventh- and 12th-grade classes in those two subjects have risen, on average, to 43 students.

“Because many states are facing serious budget gaps, we’ll see more increases this fall,” said Marguerite Roza, a [University of Washington](#) professor who has studied the recession’s impact on schools.

The increases are reversing a trend toward smaller classes that stretches back decades. Since the 1980s, teachers and many other educators have embraced research finding that smaller classes foster higher achievement.

Rachael Maher, a math teacher in Charlotte, N.C., said she had experienced the difference between smaller and larger classes. She has watched her seventh-grade classes grow since her school system ran into budget trouble three years ago. Before, her classes averaged 25 students; this year they average 31.

“They say it doesn’t affect whether kids get what they need, but I completely disagree,” Ms. Maher said. “If you’ve gained five kids, that’s five more papers to grade, five more kids who need makeup work if they’re absent, five more parents to contact, five more e-mails to answer. It gets overwhelming.”

In Detroit, the authorities are so overwhelmed by financial troubles that they are debating a deficit-reduction proposal that would increase high school class sizes to 60 students. Michigan’s state superintendent of public instruction, Michael P. Flanagan, said that the plan was unlikely to be put into effect, but that “class sizes will be higher than you and I would like.”

In New York City, average elementary class sizes have grown to 23.7 students from 21.8 since 2008, according to official data.

In Utah, one of the few states that collect class size data each year, median class size has increased by several students in many grade levels since 2008. It now ranges from 22 students in kindergarten to 31 students in high school chemistry classes.

“All the budget cuts have started our class sizes on that climb upward,” said Judy W. Park, associate superintendent of the [State Office of Education](#) in Utah. “During the last two years, our schools have really seen it.”

[Randi Weingarten](#), the president of the [American Federation of Teachers](#), said a number of surveys had shown that parents cared more about small classes than anything except school safety.

But budget cuts are forcing schools to raise class sizes, putting those who advocate shrinking them on the defensive.

Leonie Haimson, executive director of [Class Size Matters](#), a group that presses for smaller classes in New York and nationally, said many states enacted policies limiting student numbers during the late 1980s and 1990s.

“But now, in the majority of states, you’re seeing definite increases in class sizes because of the recession and budget cuts,” Ms. Haimson said. “Unfortunately we’ve also seen the rise of a narrative that’s become dominant in education reform that insists that class size doesn’t matter.”

Research that convinced many policy makers of the benefits of small classes was conducted in Tennessee.

Helen Bain, who served as the president of the nation’s largest teachers union in the 1970s, became a strong advocate for the idea. When she was a seventh-grade teacher early in her career, Ms. Bain recalled, her students learned quickly in classes of 15 or 20 students, but less effectively as class sizes grew.

“When it got to 35, I told the principal, ‘I can’t teach this many children,’ ” she said.

In the 1980s, Ms. Bain persuaded Tennessee lawmakers to finance a study comparing classes of 13 to 17 students in kindergarten through third grade with classes of 22 to 25 students. The smaller classes significantly outscored the larger classes on achievement tests.

In the decades since, researchers, including the Princeton economist Alan Krueger, have conducted studies that they say confirm and strengthen the validity of the Tennessee findings.

Others, including Eric Hanushek, a Stanford economist, have argued that the impact of small classes on achievement has been exaggerated and that giving students a skillful teacher is more cost-effective.

#### Related

- **[Bipartisan Group Backs Common School Curriculum \(March 7, 2011\)](#)**

Those who support that notion include Secretary of Education [Arne Duncan](#), who last Sunday told governors gathered in Washington to consider paying bonuses to the best teachers to take on extra students.

Mr. Duncan said he would prefer to put his own school-age children in a classroom with 28 students led by a “fantastic teacher” than in one with 23 and a “mediocre” teacher.

[Bill Gates](#) made a similar argument to the governors, portraying the movement to reduce class sizes as one of the most expensive and fruitless efforts in American education.

The federal Department of Education collects nationwide class size data every few years, and the average has declined steadily for half a century. In 1961, the average elementary school class had 29 students, and the average high school class had 28. In 2007-8, the most recent year with data, the elementary school average was 20, and the high school average was 23.4.

Dr. Roza, who is an adviser to Mr. Gates, said she had measured a recent decline of half a percent in the total number of employees in American public education. “That’s meant some growth,” she said, but average class sizes have not ballooned.

“Maybe the national average went up one kid,” Dr. Roza said. “But I don’t think we’ve jumped to 30 kids per class.”

The nationwide movement to shrink classes dates to the early 1980s, when Texas passed a law limiting class sizes, to 22 students in elementary grades. Tennessee followed with class-size reduction measures for the early grades.

In 1996, California lawmakers approved a measure to reduce class sizes to 20 for kindergarten through third grade. Today, more than 30 states have some form of programs to reduce class sizes.

But many have been challenged since the recession.

In Texas, the state comptroller in December proposed loosening the class size limit, saying it could save \$558 million in teacher salaries. That proposal has found backers in a Legislature that is weighing \$10 billion in cuts from public education over two years, but teachers and parent groups are outraged.

In California, which has spent about \$20 billion on a class-size reduction program, state officials deferred financing for it in 2009 and reduced penalties to districts that allowed average classes to grow above the limits.

In Florida, where voters in 2002 approved a ballot initiative amending the State Constitution to cap elementary classes at 18 students and high schools at 25, the authorities are struggling with those limits.

“If an elementary gets a 19th student during the year, they have to hire a teacher and split the class, and that makes no sense,” said Wayne Blanton, executive director of the [Florida School Boards Association](#).

In November, a ballot initiative that asked voters to repeal class-size limits won a majority, but it fell short of the 60 percent required to overturn a constitutional amendment.

As of late last year, Florida school districts had accumulated \$41 million in penalties for exceeding the caps. Palm Beach County’s penalty alone totaled \$16.6 million.

This year districts have been appealing the penalties, and state officials have reduced many. Florida lawmakers are debating ways of giving school systems more flexibility without violating the law.

### [Los Angeles Times:](#)

## **Census may shift political power in California to minorities and the interior**

Traditional coastal strongholds like Los Angeles will lose clout along with the large number of minorities who have moved inland. Non-whites may see more opportunities in the Legislature and Congress as areas are redistricted.

By Seema Mehta, Los Angeles Times

*March 9, 2011*

California's minority population has grown substantially, most dramatically in the interior of the state, according to new census figures that project a sharp rearrangement of the state's political power during this year's redistricting of legislative and congressional seats.

Political power will shift away from traditional strongholds such as Los Angeles and San Francisco and into the Inland Empire and Central Valley. Minorities, whose representation in the Legislature and the California congressional delegation has never matched their population numbers, could see increased opportunities to gain control of elected offices.

[INTERACTIVE: Have demographic changed in your political districts?](#)

"The California state Legislature and the congressional delegation are about to look a lot more like California. You're going to see districts that are much more likely to elect minority candidates and a huge shift from the coast inland," said Dan Schnur, director of USC's Unruh Institute of Politics.

The [U.S. Census Bureau](#) figures released Tuesday show that during the past decade, the percentage of Latinos has approached parity with non-Hispanic whites — 37.6% to 40.1%, with Asians at 12.8% and blacks at 5.8%.

The release of the census data, which occurs every 10 years, is the official kickoff of a frenetic redrawing of legislative and congressional districts.

The population figures will have greater weight in California this year than ever before. In the past, legislators drew the lines into districts that protected themselves and other incumbents — creating few truly competitive seats — and often gave short shrift to minority communities.

This time, because of a voter-approved ballot measure that was strongly opposed by both political parties, an independent body will be drawing political boundaries for the state's 53 members of Congress, 40 state senators and 80 state Assembly members for the first time in California.

The commission will hold public hearings across the state in April and May and hopes to release a draft of the redrawn districts by early June.

"We have a tremendous amount of work to do," said Maria Blanco, a commission member from Los Angeles.

Although details about redrawn districts will not be available for months, the data released Tuesday will leave an indelible imprint on the governance of the nation's largest state.

California grew by 3.4 million people in the last decade, a rate that was on par with the national average. But for the first time in the state's history, California did not grow enough to gain a seat in the [U.S. House of Representatives](#) — because other states expanded more dramatically.

The data released Tuesday showed that much of California's growth was fueled by Latinos, who saw their numbers increase nearly 28% to 14 million, and Asians, who saw a nearly 31% gain to nearly 4.8 million. The two other major demographic groups were in retreat: Non-Hispanic whites declined more than many demographers had predicted, dropping 5.4% to just under 15 million. The number of blacks declined nearly 1% to nearly 2.2 million residents.

Though most parts of the state added population, growth was greater in the interior and more anemic along the coast.

Most noteworthy there was Los Angeles County, a historic pillar of political power along with the Bay Area. The county remained the largest in the state, with 9.8 million residents. But it grew just 3.1% from 2000.

Counties in the Inland Empire and Central Valley, meanwhile, saw explosive growth through much of

the decade, though it faltered somewhat in recent years as the nation suffered through the recession. Riverside County's population increased by nearly 42% between 2000 and 2010; Kern County grew nearly 27%.

Those population changes mean that inland areas are likely to see their congressional and legislative delegations grow, as coastal areas see their representation decline.

"In both San Francisco and Los Angeles, the post-redistricting political landscape is going to look like a game of musical chairs — with switchblades," Schnur said. "There's simply no way that either the Southland or the Bay Area is going to be able to support as many seats, so some of those members are either going to move east or go home."

Some California Republicans greeted the shift as a sign that they could increase their numbers, since inland areas have historically leaned Republican.

"Certainly this is shaping up for a very dynamic 2012 election for everyone," said Ron Nehring, chairman of the California Republican Party, who argued that the burgeoning inland growth showed that Californians were retreating from the state's liberal bases.

But others noted that Latinos, who drove the population change, have traditionally voted Democratic and that their increased presence in inland areas may offset conservative voters.

Riverside County, for example, has seen its Latino population increase 78%. That could present problems for the region's elected officials, such as U.S. Rep. Ken Calvert (R-Corona), who represents parts of Orange and Riverside counties. The Latino population in his district increased 64%.

"The population is shifting inland but the districts are no longer as conservative and Republican as they were," said GOP consultant Adam Mendelsohn.

The population growth is "largely Latino, and I do think if Republicans want to take advantage of the opportunity of more people coming inland, it's going to require a change in message and approach," he said. "They're still largely communicating with older white conservatives, and until their message expands beyond those groups, they will struggle in their geographic strongholds as more and more Latinos make up the inland voting base."

Democratic incumbents will face challenges of their own, even though they represent the state's biggest political party. The coastal areas likely to lose seats are the party's strongholds.

Los Angeles County's black population may not be large enough to support the three congressional representatives in historically African American districts — Democrats Laura Richardson, Karen Bass and Maxine Waters. As the districts are redrawn, one of their seats could be moved to the Inland Empire, or the lines could be shifted so that two incumbents end up residing in the same district, creating an intraparty battle for the nomination.

The Latino population in the San Fernando Valley is large enough that it will probably end up with enough power to choose a congressional representative, which could create problems for Reps. Brad Sherman, Henry A. Waxman or Howard L. Berman, all of them white Democratic veterans.

"This causes more disruption for Los Angeles legislators than I would have thought, because what do you do with all those districts bumping into one another?" said Tony Quinn, a former legislative redistricting staffer. "You create ripples in all directions."

A spokesman with the state Democratic Party said such matters were in the hands of the redistricting commission.

"Like everyone else, we're waiting for those maps to come out," Tenoch Flores said. "It's too early to say one way or the other."

The Citizens Redistricting Commission, which will use the population data released Tuesday to draw legislative and congressional boundaries, is required to create districts of equal size. Districts cannot be drawn to protect incumbents, or to dilute a minority community's strength.

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