

PRIORITY FOCUS



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STATE BUDGET CRISIS DEEPENS

This week in the Capitol the focus was all about the state's budget crisis, but the week ended with no solution in sight. *For more, see Page 2.*



LEGISLATIVE BUDGET COMMITTEES REVIEW OPTIONS

League staff joined with California Redevelopment Association (CRA) representatives and other local government lobbyists yesterday to monitor and weigh in on legislative budget committee discussions about state budget options that could affect local government. *For more, see Page 2.*



AIR BOARD ADOPTS CLIMATE CHANGE SCOPING PLAN

The California Air Resources Board (ARB) voted unanimously yesterday to ensure that targets in the board's greenhouse gas reduction plan will be consistent with just-passed state legislation requiring regional transportation and air quality planning. *For more, see Page 3.*

'State Budget Continued from Page 1...

The week started with an unusual combined session of the Senate and Assembly to hear from state elected and appointed officials about the extent of the state's fiscal crisis and the importance of the legislature acting quickly to solve it. According to the non-partisan Legislative Analyst, the state was facing a deficit estimated at \$28 billion over the next year and a half (\$11.2 billion in the current year, and \$17 billion over the next year).

Opening the session, Assembly Speaker Karen Bass said, "We can't afford not to act." Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg followed, describing the need for all legislators to fully understand the extent of the budget crisis. "We can't argue about right solutions, unless we agree on the urgency and gravity of the problem," he said. "This is not a partisan issue or ideological problem."

Legislators then heard about the depth of the state's fiscal crisis and the necessity of quick action in presentations by State Finance Director Michael Genest, Legislative Analyst Mac Taylor, State Controller John Chiang and State Treasurer Bill Lockyer.

Questions from legislators on both sides of the partisan divide did not indicate much movement from their fundamental perspectives. The session closed down with both houses scheduling follow-up hearings by their budget committees.

By Wednesday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger upped the ante, announcing that the Department of Finance now pegged the 18-month deficit at \$41 billion. He attributed the increase in the deficit to the Legislature's failure to pass a budget solution during November's special session.

"Big Five" budget meetings were held this week, (the Governor, Senate Pro Tem Steinberg, Assembly Speaker Bass, Assembly Minority Leader Villines and Senate Minority Leader Cogdill). Yesterday, the meetings appeared to blow up as Sen. Cogdill walked out of a meeting, angry at press leaks that appeared to come from the governor's office. Cogdill did say that he would attend future meetings, but only negotiate in the future with other legislators.

Separate informational hearings were also held yesterday by the Senate Budget Subcommittee 2 on State Administration and the full Assembly Budget Committee for the special session. Both houses plan to continue hearings today. (See "Legislative Budget Committees Review Options.")

'Budget Committees' Continued from Page 1...

Separate informational hearings were held by the Senate Budget Subcommittee 2 on State Administration and the full Assembly Budget Committee for the special session. As a solution for the current year deficit and to continue in future years, one of these proposals presented in the Senate by the Legislative Analyst was to increase the current year taking of \$350 million in redevelopment funds by \$50 million.

While city officials know that things can change quickly in the Capitol, at least at this hearing legislators appeared cool to the idea, referencing CRA's recently-filed lawsuit which challenges the current year taking of redevelopment funds. They also posed a number of questions and discussed the positive role that redevelopment agencies play in job creation and reducing blight.

The subcommittee also discussed the possibility of using a portion of redevelopment tax increment funds to securitize state borrowing for debt reduction. This notion surfaced during last year's budget discussions as well. The Administration has also looked at this idea, but made no recommendation on it at this time.

League staff and CRA representatives testified at the hearing, expressing concerns with both proposals.

The Assembly Budget Committee for the Extraordinary Session held an informational hearing on the impact of the state's inability to sell bonds. This was described in detail by State Treasurer Lockyer when he spoke on Monday to the combined session. Importantly for cities, the Treasurer's office informed the committee that the \$187 million in cities' local street and road bonds authorized in the current year budget have in fact been sold, and that cities will get their funding this year.

The League strongly urges cities to move quickly to access this money and put it to use in your communities.

Both houses plan to continue their budget information hearings today.

'ARB Continued from Page 1...

The board's action was applauded by the League of California Cities and representatives from many individual cities that traveled to Sacramento to testify on the plan.

League testimony was delivered by League of California Cities' First Vice President Ken Cooley, Council Member, city of Rancho Cordova. A key concern for the cities was that board might increase a proposed target of 5 million metric tons (MMT) of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) that local planning organizations must achieve by reducing regional transportation-related GHG. The League argued that the 5 MMT figure should not be increased further, in deference to the regional target setting process that was carefully negotiated as part of SB 375, the recently-passed landmark legislation on regional transportation planning by Sen. Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento).

"I'm here with my colleagues from other cities to let you know that we supported Sen. Darrell Steinberg's SB 375, because we believed that regional targets grounded in science, data and stakeholder participation were the right way to go, said Cooley.

"It would be a mistake for this board to make an arbitrary increase in the 5 MMT number at this time, before the SB 375 regional planning process had begun."

The board later unanimously adopted a resolution as part of the Scoping Plan that recognized the role of the regional target setting process, but encouraged the ultimate goals be "ambitious" and "achievable."

Cooley also reminded the board that cities are a willing partner in the state's goal of reducing GHG, but their efforts are hampered by state budget actions that cut transit programs and take local redevelopment funds.

The League thanks the many cities that sent comment letters to the ARB on the Scoping Plan, and the city officials who took the time to travel to Sacramento to attend the hearing yesterday. That participation was essential to our success yesterday.

The League of California Cities has supported legislation to combat climate change, and many cities and other local agencies have embraced the challenge of reducing their carbon footprint. The League's research arm, the Institute for Local Government, has produced "best practices" tips for cities to use, and "greening strategies" are a key topic of discussion at League conferences and educational sessions. The positive response by cities and counties to the climate change issue was the subject of a study released last month by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

League Prepared Background and Talking Points on the Scoping Plan:

http://www.cacities.org/resource_files/27474.ScopingPlan_BackgroundandTalkingPoints_11dec08.pdf

The League's Letter to ARB on the Scoping Plan:
http://www.cacities.org/resource_files/27475.AB32ScopingPlanLOCCommentsFINAL14nov08.pdf

Further information is available at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/board/ma/2008/ma121108.htm>

City Advocate Weekly Replaces Priority Focus in January

The League is pleased to announce a new name for its weekly newsletter: *City Advocate Weekly*. With a tag line of "Legislation and Policy Affecting California Cities," the renamed publication will also feature a redesigned masthead. Stories will continue to focus on key legislation affecting cities and other items of interest to city officials.

The League anticipates launching *City Advocate Weekly* sometime in January. *Priority Focus* will remain in place until the rename is official and subscribers will automatically receive *City Advocate Weekly* without having to re-subscribe.

Immigrant Integration Program Award Opportunity for Cities

The national awards program "E Pluribus Unum Prizes" will provide four \$50,000 awards annually to exceptional initiatives administered through public agencies, community organizations, businesses, or individuals, which promote immigrant integration. Applications are due Jan. 31, 2009. For more information and application guidelines, please visit:
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/integrationawards/apply.cfm>

The awards program is coordinated by the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, which provides groups and individuals around the United States with resources to build their knowledge and skills in the area of immigrant integration. For the purpose of this prize, immigrant integration is defined as the two-way process by which immigrants and their children come to feel -- and be -- Americans, and by which American identity and culture expand to reflect each new generation of immigrants.

New Institute for Local Government Publication

The Institute for Local Government has recently released a new publication, *A Local Official's Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement*. This guide offers examples and strategies to more effectively involve members of immigrant communities in local outreach and civic engagement efforts.

Please visit www.ca-ilg.org/ICEG to download the publication, or purchase it at www.ca-ilg.org/ilgpubs

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Carmen Pereira, Institute for Local Government Program Assistant, at cpereira@ca-ilg.org.

CGI Launches New Youth Commission Newsletter

The Institute for Local Government's Collaborative Governance Initiative (CGI) just launched its first edition of the tri-annual Youth Commission Staff E-News newsletter. The e-newsletter is available to youth commission staff, youth commissioners and others interested in youth civic participation in California. Each issue will feature new resources, program ideas, strategies, success stories and more. For example, the October 2008 issue includes information from the National League of Cities on a new toolkit for municipal leaders called *Creating a Youth Master Plan* and tips on forming a youth commission or council.

To sign up for the Youth Commission Staff E-News newsletter, please visit www.ca-ilg.org/youthengagement or email Carmen Pereira, Program Assistant, at cpereira@ca-ilg.org.

Civic Participation Articles in Western City

The complete set of articles is part of a six-issue series on civic participation in *Western City* magazine. The series may be at www.ca-ilg.org/civicparticipation.

The Institute for Local Government is the nonprofit research affiliate of the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties. The Collaborative Governance Initiative, a program of the Institute, supports informed and inclusive civic engagement in public decision-making, and helps cities and counties successfully navigate among the array of community engagement options that bring the public's voice to the table on important issues.

Sustainability Feature Request

The League of California Cities regularly runs a feature in our newsletter highlighting the sustainability efforts/programs many cities are implementing. We are constantly on the look out for creative ways that cities are becoming green or finding a way to involve their community and reduce their carbon footprint.

The stories we run are typically 300-600 words and while they generally focus on one aspect of what an individual city is doing on this front, on occasion, a multi-city effort will be profiled.

We are interested in reviewing your city's Sustainability Plan or Green Plan if there is one in place to learn about your city's programs.

Please e-mail a copy of your Sustainability Plan to Adrienne Sprenger, League communications specialist at asprenger@cacities.org. For file sizes larger than 4 MB, please e-mail us a link to your plan on your Web site or burn a copy to CD and mail to:

Adrienne Sprenger
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1400 K Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

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Visit (and bookmark!) the League's [Legislative Resources](http://www.cacities.org/legresources) Web page (www.cacities.org/legresources). You'll find a roster and contact information for the League's legislative staff; the online Bill Search program, background materials on lobbying your legislators, and more.
