California is facing a fiscal emergency, a $14.5 billion budget hole. Strong, decisive action is needed. Ah, just like the good ol' days.

In a crisis reminiscent of the one that got Gray Davis shoved out the door, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is calling for deep cuts and revolutionary reforms.

And none of it will happen. Just like the good ol' days.

Sorry to be so negative here, but this is the state government after all. Compromise is not part of the vocabulary in Sacramento, nor is decisiveness. After Schwarzenegger released his state budget plan Thursday afternoon, legislators will spend the next few months telling constituents why none of it can be done — and so nothing will be done.

"We can't cut funding to the poor." "We can't cut funding to the schools." "We can't cut services to the needy." "We can't put public safety at risk." "We can't let people out of prison early." "We can't close state parks." "We can't cut our own staff."

You'll hear them all.

Democrats will say they can't cut spending. Republicans will say they can't raise taxes. And when a tardy state budget is finally approved in, oh, September, it will be filled with gimmicks and fuzzy accounting that just delay the real problems for another year.

Again, pardon the cynicism, but we've seen this song and dance before.

So what needs to be done? Cut spending and cut the bureaucracy. Schwarzenegger's idea to cut 10 percent in each department is a great start.

What will be done?

Read between the lines and you'll see. Schwarzenegger knows the Democrat-dominated Legislature will never cut spending across the board. He also knows Republicans will never approve a tax increase. Instead, he'll propose cuts so draconian that legislators will have to bend a little. Democrats will agree to certain cuts and maybe even a long-term spending cap if Republicans agree to certain tax increases (which they will try to disguise by calling "fees").

In the end, it won't nearly be enough to fix the problem in the short term or the long term, but that's not their biggest concern. After all, there's an election in November.
Gotta keep everybody happy until then. Doing the responsible thing and getting the state's auto-pilot spending under control would just anger the campaign contributors who help them get re-elected. Wouldn't that be awful?