More budget blues for Chico State University

By LARRY MITCHELL - Staff Writer
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The state budget that passed Wednesday means that Chico State University, seen here from First...

SACRAMENTO — Chico State University and other campuses of the California State University would be hit again under the state budget that passed Wednesday afternoon.

The budget, a Democratic proposal, included an additional $150 million cut to the CSU, according to a news release sent out by the office of CSU Chancellor Charles Reed.

In a budget bill passed earlier this year, the CSU sustained a $500 million cut. So the total reduction from last year’s level of state support would be $650 million — a 23 percent cut, the news release said.

Asked about the latest cut, Chico State President Paul Zingg wrote in an email, "This is further disappointment — not just for our public universities, but for the future of our state. These times require investment in our future, not retreat from its promise."

The chancellor's news release said the $150 million cut meant there was no choice "but to increase student tuition and limit enrollment."

CSU educators weren't the only ones unhappy about the Democratic spending plan. Republican legislators were upset, too, but for different reasons.

Assemblyman Dan Logue, R-Linda, said what the Democrats did was illegal and that Republicans would challenge the budget in court.

It's not legal to raise fees and taxes with a simple majority vote, Logue said in a phone interview Wednesday afternoon.

He said while Proposition 25, approved last year, allows passing a budget with a simple majority vote. Proposition 26, also passed last year, requires a two-thirds majority vote to raise taxes and fees. He added, fees and taxes were raised on Wednesday without a two-thirds vote.
State Sen. Doug LaMalfa, R-Richvale, and Assemblyman Jim Nielsen, R-Gerber, both said they weren't sure about the legality of the simple-majority votes to raise state revenue.

Nielsen, in a phone interview, said, "an on-time budget has passed," but he added not all the budgetary issues have been resolved.

For one thing, he said he's sure Gov. Brown will continue to try to extend three tax increases he's been working to pass all year.

Also, there is the matter of realignment in public safety and other areas, Nielsen said, calling it "literally a dump of state responsibilities (onto local governments) with insufficient funds."

He said his big concern is that dangerous prison inmates who have not been rehabilitated will be set free with tragic effects. Nielsen said he would fight against this as hard as he could.

LaMalfa said while among Democrats "there's a lot of optimism" that Wednesday's budget balances, many Republicans think it may not.

Republicans plan to ask the state controller and treasurer to analyze whether it really is balanced, he said. If it turns out it's not, legislators may go back to work on it.

The budget went through via a handful of bills. They passed essentially on party-line votes, LaMalfa said.

The senator noted that under the budget, residents of rural regions known as State Responsibility Areas would have to pay a new fee of $150 per dwelling for fire protection from the state.

Logue said Republicans could claim a victory because none of them agreed to vote for Brown's proposal to extend certain tax increases.

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