Our view: The governor's proposal doesn't even attempt to balance the budget until five months into the fiscal year.

Gov. Jerry Brown, the quarterback of a struggling team, threw the political equivalent of a Hail Mary pass on Monday.

Legislators from each party are supposed to use the governor's "May revise" budget proposal as a starting point for negotiations. They are given a month to agree on a final budget and send it to the governor, who is supposed to approve a final budget by June 30, the day before the fiscal year begins.

But instead of balancing the existing budget — trying to make revenues match expenses — Brown threw up a prayer of sorts. His proposal is to imagine that revenue will suddenly grow by $5.9 billion in November because voters will see things his way and approve new sales and income taxes.

It seems highly dubious to approve a budget based on wishful thinking. It's like a family with a limited income buying a million-dollar home in the hope that one of the parents will land a lucrative job next year.

The budget, even based in fantasy, has to balance on paper — and imagined revenues coming nearly halfway through the fiscal year needs a Plan B. Brown's plan, if the taxes aren't approved by voters, is to cut $5.5 billion to K-12 schools and $250 million each to the California State University and University of California systems over the last seven months of the fiscal year.

In a conference call with reporters Monday, Brown reasoned that most of the state budget is spent on education, so education must bear the biggest cuts. But actually it's a strategy. He's telling voters to approve higher taxes, or else programs they hold dear will suffer.

It's fitting that Brown called them "trigger cuts," because he's holding a gun to voters: Raise your taxes, or the schools take a bullet.

It's not a realistic scenario, either. Brown can talk all he wants about trigger cuts, but we wonder if $5.5 billion in K-12 cuts is even possible five months into the fiscal year. Schools can't lay off
most employees, particularly teachers, midway through the year. So where will they realize billions in savings?

Brown was asked that in the conference call. The first option he mentioned was shortening the work week — in other words, shortening the school year.

"Hopefully they have some reserves," Brown said. Yet he probably knows that most school districts, like all government agencies, are hurting financially.

He said "different districts will do it in different ways," but there aren't many options when 85 percent to 90 percent of district costs are usually tied to salaries.

He added: "You've put your finger on a difficult set of decisions school districts have to (prepare for)."

The Legislature must reject Brown's budget recommendations. We can't rely on a questionable taxation plan that regardless wouldn't help until nearly halfway into the fiscal year. The Legislature needs to demand immediate solutions.

This is no time for wishful thinking. It's time for realistic thinking.