



Schwarzenegger's budget proposal gets mixed reviews

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The north valley's three Republican legislators praised Gov. Schwarzenegger's proposed budget Wednesday.

However, state Sen. Sam Aanestad's compliments were lukewarm. He insisted the spending plan didn't go far enough toward ending "structural deficits" -- which is what Republicans call the ongoing problem of the state spending more than it takes in each year.

Assemblymen Rick Keene, R-Chico, and Doug LaMalfa, R-Richvale, were more enthusiastic.

"It looks pretty positive," Keene said, adding the governor will face a challenge in getting his proposal approved. "The Democrats will have something to say about that."

In telephone interviews, Keene and LaMalfa said it was great the budget calls for spending increases of just 1 percent.

Both said the proposed budget appears to get rid of structural deficits although they added it will take more study to see if they are really gone. Sometimes "parlor tricks" are used to make it appear a budget is balanced, LaMalfa said. But he added, "I think these guys are playing it pretty straight."

In his news release, Aanestad stated he was concerned that revenue projections in the budget are unrealistic.

It seems that necessary cuts are just being postponed once again, he said.

LaMalfa noted he saw people near the Capitol Wednesday protesting the governor's proposal to cut welfare for some children whose parents won't work.

"I'm all about children having what they need," he said. But with welfare programs, there must be "accountability." By that, he said he meant parents ought to show they've made real efforts to provide for their children before they are handed public money.

Strong opposition to parts of the budget is expected from Democrats.

The Sacramento Bee quoted Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez as saying, "This budget reminds me of when someone comes up to me and says, 'I've got good news, and I got bad news. If you ride a bus or a subway, want to take your kids to a state park, or have to pay for your kid's tuition and fees, then this budget will hit you hard. But it could be worse. Much worse.'"

Allan Zaremborg, president and CEO of the California Chamber of Commerce, called the budget proposal "great news" in a statement his organization sent out Wednesday afternoon.

"Gov. Schwarzenegger has presented a budget with no operating deficit, no new taxes and accelerated repayment of our state's debt, while spending growth has been held to 1 percent," he stated.

Also, Wednesday afternoon, an organization called California Church Impact criticized the governor's proposed cuts in welfare for children.

The organization sent an e-mail to people on its mailing list, urging them to sign a statement protesting the cuts.

"No moral good can ever come from cutting many children on welfare from all funding," the e-mail read in part.

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