



## Editorial: Use scissors on state credit card

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We've all heard the term "tax-and-spend liberals." Both Democrats and Republicans cringe when they hear it -- Democrats because they think it's an unfair stereotype, Republicans because they think it's dead-on true.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger conjures up a new appellation -- "borrow-and-spend Republicans." And that should bother all of us.

While we admire Schwarzenegger's grand vision for California, his approach to fixing it is unwise. The state is already in debt. You don't fix that problem by borrowing even more.

Yet that's what the governor proposes to do. In his state of the state speech Tuesday, he outlined a plan to use \$43.3 billion in bonds to build classrooms, roads, lakes, prisons, courthouses and perhaps anything else legislators want to put on the wish list as they massage his proposal.

Schwarzenegger was swept into office while spouting the conservative line that the state has a spending problem and needs to fix it. We couldn't agree more. Since then, Schwarzenegger has elevated spending to unseen levels. That's why Republicans call him a RINO (Republican In Name Only).

Granted, the deficit has diminished since he took office, but our bond debt is dangerously high, largely because the governor has used his star power and clout to convince us that we need to borrow to cure what ails us. So voters approved a \$15 billion deficit reduction bond in 2004. And this past November they approved \$42.7 billion in infrastructure bonds. There are countless projects in the pipeline, and the state still doesn't even know how it will spend all the money.

How will the state afford another \$43.3 billion? The governor's team says the state is recovering nicely, so it's counting on future revenue to pay the bill. But if the economy goes in the toilet, the state will be in trouble. Just ask Gray Davis.

The opposition to Schwarzenegger's credit-card financing will come from his own party. They don't want to be known as borrow-and-spend Republicans.

Republican legislators who responded to the governor's speech Tuesday were careful not to throw a wet blanket on the idea, saying they appreciated his grand vision. But they also vowed to adhere to "Republican principles" -- that is, making sure taxes are not raised, jobs are not eliminated and ensuring that whatever is built can be paid for without borrowing.

As north state Sen. Sam Aanestad, R-Grass Valley, put it: "I thought it was a very good speech. But where is the money going to come from? What are we going to sacrifice? What gets cut to pay for it all? The devil is in the details."

As always.

The ideas sound great -- until we get to that little part about putting all the financing on the backs of future generations. It will be up to the Republicans to sound that note of inquiry. That won't be easy because the Democrats hold the majority in both houses of the Legislature -- and the governor is even starting to talk like a Democrat.

The borrow-and-spend model isn't the way to prosperity. If the state can't afford the pay-as-you-go approach, then the timing isn't right.