



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF CALIFORNIA**

The Governor's 2013-14 Budget Proposal

Can we finally celebrate the end of deficits?

The League of Women Voters of California is pleased that Governor Brown was able to present a balanced budget.

While we are happy to see a budget that is not completely focused on painful cuts in state programs, it is still very early in the budget process, and we all need to proceed with caution. In this economy, the outlook may change. Past practices that relied on significant borrowing, along with strategies such as underestimating costs and overestimating expected revenues, only led to larger problems in each subsequent year. The League will join with others in and out of government to monitor and participate in the budget process as the legislative session proceeds.

For too many years, essential state programs—from schools to mental health care to the courts—have been cut. As increased revenue becomes available, it is essential that we look at bringing these programs back to a healthy equilibrium. We are pleased that in many areas the budget proposal makes no further reductions, and in some programs there are modest funding increases. The health of our communities depends on taking care of each other and supporting the basic structures of our democratic society.

The League has long advocated for reform of the way our public schools are financed, and we look forward to being part of the upcoming discussions. We are pleased that the governor has continued to make the school funding system itself a priority and that his stated emphasis is on local decision making, flexibility, public involvement, transparency, and accountability. We appreciate his recognition that it costs more money to educate students with higher needs, but continue to have concerns about some of the details; there are many unknowns about his plan. We look forward to working with the governor, the legislature, the education community, and the many other interested individuals and organizations in a strategic and thoughtful way to create a system that truly serves our students and our state.

We believe that we need to whittle down the debt that has accrued over the past years, but also believe that we need to look carefully at the cuts made over the past years and give priority to rebuilding programs before we make significant payments to debtors. Early childhood education for the youngest Californians and health and human services programs affect the health of our society now and for many years to come. The first debt that should be repaid is the money that is owed to our schools.

One new source of revenue is to eliminate unjustified tax expenditures and other “give-aways” from past years’ budget deals. Undoing some of these deals will both help the state balance sheet and make the tax system more equitable.

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