

California governor proposes permanent funding for public safety in revised budget

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Earlier this month, California Governor Brown released a revised budget proposal after the state's deficit grew to \$16 billion, an approximately \$7 billion increase from the January 2012 projection. Brown said protecting education and public safety are his number one priorities.

Brown proposed a permanent funding source for the 2011 public safety realignment, which shifts criminal justice responsibilities from the state to localities. The realignment affects court security, lower-level offenders and parolees, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and adult protective services.

Brown attributed the increased deficit to two things: lower tax revenues and federal courts blocking cost-cutting measures.

To combat the larger deficit, Brown proposes increasing revenues and making more spending cuts. Under an initiative on the November ballot, citizens will vote to increase income taxes on the highest earners by up to 3 percent for seven years, and also to increase the state sales tax by a quarter percent for four years. If the tax initiative is not approved, a series of deeper cuts will take effect January 1, 2013.

Analyst's Take

A permanent funding source for the 2011 realignment would be a welcomed resource for localities, as it would provide them with stable, known, and reliable funding. A stable and known funding source would allow localities to plan into the future more effectively and hedge against the volatility of other funding sources. The 2011 California public safety realignment pushed more responsibilities to localities to increase levels of service, eliminate the duplication of effort, and increase flexibilities. With more responsibilities, local public safety agencies will likely need increased assistance from vendors providing cost-effective technologies and market expertise.