



# A DEFINING MOMENT

*Community College League of California*

March 24, 2011

Dear Martha,

Governor Brown just signed several of the "trailer bills" that accompanied last week's passage of the budget bill. The education trailer bill, [SB 70](#), includes the fee increase from \$26 to \$36 per credit unit (effective fall semester), as well as the new \$129 million deferral from the end of the 2011-12 fiscal year to the 2012-13 fiscal year. For the geeks that noticed the technical error in the deferral language, we have been told a signing message will accompany the bill to ensure that, despite flawed language, the new deferral is from January-June 2012, to be repaid in October 2012.

Notably, the governor did not sign the main budget bill, [SB 69](#), which has not technically been sent to him by the Legislature, despite its passage last Thursday. The twelve-day clock for the governor to act on the bill doesn't apply until he physically receives the bill.

Capitol observers were caught a bit off-guard this morning by a short Senate session and the declaration by Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg that there would be a short session on Friday (required for the three-day weekend per diem), and that members would be "on call" for the weekend. Most people believe that, if no action is taken by Sunday, a June election can essentially be ruled out.

It now seems very unlikely that there will be a June election, and the governor this morning spoke of "initiatives" during a conference of the California State Association of Counties, leading many to believe that the November playbook is a distinct possibility. At the same time, a new poll by the respected Public Policy Institute of California found that only 46% of California residents were inclined to vote "yes" on the governor's tax extensions. This is the worst polling to date, and there is no reason to believe June vs. November makes a difference.

Folks, we are quickly approaching the [all-cuts budget scenario](#).

Even Senate Republican Bob Huff, who has not been a member of the "GOP 5" negotiating for a deal, acknowledged "an all-cuts budget isn't our first choice." However, there's a growing sense that options are running out, as evidenced by Governor Brown's statement yesterday that "Whichever way I look, there are bears in the forest."

Republicans feel that they need to deliver even more to break their pledges and cast votes for taxes. Democrats are balking at the growing Republican demands. Labor, expected to fund the campaign, won't accept most of the GOP demands and is worried that a losing election happens, essentially validating an all-cuts budget (albeit in a very low turnout special election). The game of chicken may be about to come to a very ugly end that nobody actually wants.

Now, turn that frown upside down.

I just returned to Los Angeles from an amazing morning at Bakersfield College. This morning,

campus and districts leaders hosted a press conference to announce a \$14 million gift from Dr. Norman Levan. Two-thirds of the gift will endow \$2,000 scholarships for 250 students annually in perpetuity, and the remaining will enhance Dr. Levan's 2006 gift of \$5.7 million for a lifelong learning and an institute for the humanities. **The gift is the largest individual gift ever to a community college.**

Dr. Levan, a 95-year-old dermatologist, never attended a community college. One of his former patients, however, was former Bakersfield President John Collins. Over the years of hearing Collins talk about the transformation of lives that was occurring at BC, Levan decided to make it be the home to much of his philanthropy and his affinity for the humanities.

The celebration of the largest individual gift to a community college for scholarships on the day the governor signed the largest fee increase in California history was a sad coincidence. We need to embrace the philanthropic potential of our colleges, but we must concurrently recognize that scholarships to attend institutions that are on a qualitative decline is not progress.

As I said at the press conference, during the darkest nights, the brightest lighthouses shine. Dr. Levan is one of those lighthouses--a beacon of hope for students and communities that are looking to education to lift them from economic pain and to ensure California's brighter days area head.

I can't assure you when the dark night will end, but I hope you'll take the challenge of the high bar set by Dr. Levan and Bakersfield College and seek out the lighthouses in your community.

Sincerely,



Scott Lay  
President and Chief Executive Officer, The League  
Orange Coast College '94

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**Community College League of California**  
**2017 O Street, Sacramento, California 95811**  
**916.444.8641 . [www.ccleague.org](http://www.ccleague.org)**