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Idaho Common Sense™



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California's latest budget crisis

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Experts projected California would have budget deficits of more than \$35 billion, requiring massive budget cuts and tax increases. The Governor proposed \$17 billion in program cuts and \$8.3 billion in tax increases. Education programs faced over \$2.7 billion in cuts with proposed additional cuts of \$5.2 billion.

In a recall petition, the governor was accused of "gross mismanagement of California's finances by overspending taxpayers' money and by cutting funds to local governments." Are these the statistics of California's current financial crisis? No. These program cuts and tax hikes are from 2003 when Governor Gray Davis was in office and facing a recall election.

But Governor Schwarzenegger, California's current governor, is in even worse financial straits than Davis, forgetting what he said in 2003 responding to then Governor Davis. He promised there would be no more budget deficits, no more reckless borrowing, and no more caving in to special interest groups. He promised to "tear up the credit cards," the same ones he is now using for his record-breaking borrowing.

California's current budget has a \$10.3 billion deficit. So, what do Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature propose? They propose the same crippling cuts Governor Davis proposed. Schwarzenegger wants to cut K-12 and community college programs. He recommended closing 48 state parks and even suggested early release for tens of thousands of state prisoners. And last month the California legislature considered freezing \$3.8 billion of financing for road, school, and housing construction projects.

Is there a way to deal with these ongoing staggering deficits without program cuts and tax increases? Perhaps another California issue also making headlines might help. Out-of-

state college students are suing California's college system because California subsidizes illegal aliens attending college, charging them in-state tuition rates while out-of-state United States citizens pay higher non-resident tuition rates.

How can they claim that an illegal alien living in California is a resident of California? How can they claim people who are in our country illegally are legal residents? More important, why are illegal aliens allowed to attend college rather than being deported?

Six years ago, as Governor Schwarzenegger was promising fiscal responsibility, Dan Stein of the Federation for American Immigration Reform pointed out another even more costly illegal alien problem saying, "California's addiction to 'cheap' illegal alien labor is bankrupting the state and posing enormous burdens on the state's shrinking middle class tax base." Was he prophetic while government officials turned a deaf ear?

Why does California not deal with the illegal alien problem? Primarily, because the agriculture industry, with over two-thirds of its workers illegal aliens, is too powerful for state officials to challenge. They continue their tired argument that they must hire illegal aliens because Americans will not do the work. That is at least partly true. The whole truth is that American workers will not do that work for the wages the industry gets away with paying illegal aliens. The agriculture industry illegally circumvents free market forces so they can generate unearned profits, while the government looks the other way.

But what do California's illegal aliens have to do with the state's budget crisis? What does California spend on illegal aliens?

California has 3 million illegal aliens (they are not immigrants) and spends over \$9 billion a year of

taxpayer money to educate illegal alien children, to provide medical care for illegal aliens, and to incarcerate illegal aliens who break the law. Wait a minute. Aren't all illegal aliens breaking the law - they are here illegally.

Does it make much sense to spend these staggering sums of money on illegal aliens in a state cutting programs for Americans? The budget deficit in California for 2009 will be over \$10 billion and the taxpayer costs of illegal aliens in 2009 will be over \$9 billion. Could there not only be a relationship here but also a solution?

The \$9 billion is nothing more than a subsidy for the state's powerful agriculture industry, paid for by the taxpayers of California. And instead of deporting illegal aliens, the Governor and legislature cut budgets for education, road and bridge repairs, and other programs legal American citizens need. Paraphrasing what Jay Leno said to Hugh Grant when he was caught with a prostitute, "What the hell are they thinking?"

On second thought, the comparison to paying a prostitute might be apropos. As former President Ronald Reagan said, "politics is the second oldest profession (and) I have learned that it bears a striking resemblance to the first." Catering to special interest groups, California welcomes illegal aliens, taxing citizens \$1200 a year for illegal alien services and eliminating needed programs for those citizens to support illegal aliens.

Isn't it time to put Americans' needs ahead of illegal aliens needs and enforce the law, deporting illegal aliens. Someday we might have too few people to pay for all those who do not.

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