December 14, 2011

Hon. Kamala D. Harris
Attorney General
1300 I Street, 17th Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

Attention: Ms. Dawn McFarland
Initiative Coordinator

Dear Attorney General Harris:

Pursuant to Elections Code Section 9005, we have reviewed the proposed constitutional amendment related to the state legislative and budgeting process and local finance (A.G. File No. 11-0068).

BACKGROUND

State Budget Process. Under the California Constitution, the Legislature has the power to appropriate state funds and make midyear adjustments to those appropriations. The annual state budget act is the Legislature's primary method of authorizing expenses for a particular fiscal year. The Constitution requires that (1) the Governor propose a balanced budget by January 10 for the next fiscal year (beginning July 1) and (2) the Legislature pass the annual budget act by June 15. The Governor may then either sign or veto the budget bill. The Governor also may reduce or eliminate specific appropriations items using his or her "line-item veto" power. The Legislature may override a veto with a two-thirds vote in each house. Once the budget has been approved by the Legislature and Governor, the Governor has limited authority to reduce spending during the year without legislative approval.

State Fiscal Emergencies. The Governor has the power to declare a fiscal emergency if he or she determines after the budget has been enacted that the state is facing substantial revenue shortfalls or spending overruns. In such cases, the Governor must propose legislation to address the fiscal emergency and call the Legislature into special session. If the Legislature fails to pass and send to the Governor legislation to address the budget problem within 45 days, it is prohibited from (1) acting on any other bills or (2) adjourning until such legislation is passed.

State Appropriations Process. The Legislature may enact laws that create or expand state programs or reduce state tax revenues. Any new law that has a state fiscal effect typically is referred to a committee in each house of the Legislature called the Appropriations

Committee. These committees assess the likely fiscal effect of the legislation and decide whether to recommend the passage of the legislation by each house.

PROPOSAL

This measure amends the Constitution to:

- Constrain the Legislature's authority to enact laws that increase state costs or decrease state revenues by more than $25 million annually.
- Expand the Governor's authority to implement midyear reductions to appropriations in the state budget.
- Shift state funds to local governments for the purpose of implementing new "Community Strategic Action Plans."
- Modify state and local government budget practices.

Constrains the Legislature's Authority to Increase State Costs or Decrease Revenues

The measure contains provisions that constrain the Legislature's authority to (1) create or expand state programs or (2) reduce state revenues if the fiscal effect of these actions on the state would exceed $25 million annually. In order to enact legislation containing program expansions or revenue reductions valued at more than $25 million, lawmakers generally would have to approve legislation containing revenue increases or cost reductions to offset the net change in state costs or revenues. The $25 million threshold would be adjusted annually for inflation.

Authorizes the Governor to Reduce Spending in the Budget

The measure provides that if the Legislature has not sent bills to the Governor addressing a fiscal emergency by the 45^{th} day following the issuance of the fiscal emergency proclamation, the Governor may reduce or eliminate any appropriation contained in the budget act for that fiscal year that is not otherwise required by the Constitution or federal law. The total amount reduced cannot exceed the amount necessary to balance the budget. The Legislature may override all or part of the reductions by a two-thirds vote of each house of the Legislature.

Shifts State Funds to Local Governments to Implement New Plans

Under the measure, every county and any local government (school district, community college district, city, and special district) within its borders could create a joint Community Strategic Action Plan (CSAP) for the purpose of providing services identified by the plan. Local governments that choose to participate in a CSAP would (1) receive additional funding from the state, (2) be authorized to reallocate local property taxes among participating local governments, and (3) be given limited authority to follow locally adopted procedures that are not fully consistent with state laws and regulations. Specifically:

- ***Shift of State Revenues.*** The measure creates the Performance and Accountability Trust Fund in the State Treasury to provide state resources for implementation of CSAPs. Beginning in 2013-14, the measure shifts 0.035 percent of the state sales tax rate to the Performance and Accountability Trust Fund and requires the state General Fund to backfill any reduced revenue to the fund if the state sales tax is reduced in the future. The revenue deposited in the Performance and Accountability Trust Fund would be allocated to local governments with approved CSAPs on a per capita basis.
- ***Reallocate Property Tax.*** The measure permits local governments participating in the CSAP to reallocate their property taxes among themselves if the reallocation is approved by a two-thirds vote of the governing bodies of each of the local governments affected by the reallocation.

Increased Flexibility in Program Administration. The measure allows CSAPs to include certain provisions that otherwise would be contrary to existing state laws and regulations but that are "functionally equivalent" to the objectives of those laws or regulations. The local governments would be required to submit these provisions to the Legislature (in the case of state laws) or appropriate state agency (in the case of state regulations) for review. If the Legislature or agency does not act to reject the CSAP provisions, those provisions would be deemed to be in compliance with state laws and regulations. These local CSAP provisions would expire after four years unless renewed through the same process.

State and Local Government Budgeting Practices

The measure makes various changes to state and local budgeting practices and other procedures, including:

- ***Two-Year State Budget Cycle.*** Under this measure, in each odd numbered calendar year the Governor would submit a budget proposal for the two subsequent fiscal years. For example, in January 2013 the Governor would submit a budget for the fiscal year beginning in July 2013 and for the fiscal year beginning in July 2014. In even numbered years, the Governor could submit an update for either of the two years covered by the previous submission.
- ***Performance Standards for State Programs.*** This measure contains several provisions amending the Constitution to establish a process to review the performance of state programs. Under the proposal, the Governor would be required to include certain information as part of the budget released every two years, including a statement of how the budget will achieve specified statewide goals, a statement of outcome measures by which to evaluate state agencies and programs, and a report on the state's progress in meeting statewide goals.
- ***Legislative Oversight.*** The measure changes the legislative calendar and reserves part of each legislative biennium—beginning in July of the second year of the biennium—

for legislative oversight and review of state programs. The measure requires the Legislature to create an oversight process and use this process to review every state program, whether managed by the state or local governments, at least once every five years.

- ***Legislative Process and Calendar.*** The proposal amends a provision of the Constitution related to when legislative bills must be in print. The Constitution currently requires that bills be in print and distributed to Members of the Legislature before they can be passed. This proposal amends the Constitution to require that bills generally be in print and be available to the public for three days before passage.
- ***Local Government Performance Information.*** The measure requires that each local government provide certain information as part of their adopted budgets. This information includes statements regarding how the budget will promote specified goals and priorities, description of outcome measures to assess progress in meeting these goals, and a report on the progress in achieving these goals. The measure further requires that each local government develop and implement an open and transparent process in the development of its proposed budget.

FISCAL EFFECT

State Sales Tax Revenue Transfer. The shift of a portion of the state sales tax to the Performance and Accountability Trust Fund for local government use would reduce state revenue—and increase local revenue—by about $200 million annually, beginning in 2013-14. The measure specifies that any increased revenues allocated to schools as a result of this measure would not reduce their eligibility for state funds.

Changes in Legislature's and Governor's Fiscal Authority. Constraining the Legislature's authority to expand programs or decrease revenues unless it adopts measures with offsetting fiscal effects could result in state program costs being lower—or state revenues being higher—than otherwise would be the case. In addition, expanding the Governor's authority to implement midyear reductions to the state budget could result in overall state spending being lower than it would have been otherwise. The net fiscal effect of these provisions is unknown, but could be significant over time.

Changes in Budgeting Practices. State and local governments would have increased costs to modify their budgeting practices and provide more ongoing information regarding program outcomes. Specifically, state and local governments likely would experience increased information technology, printing, and data analysis costs. These costs would be higher initially—perhaps in the range of tens of millions of dollars annually—and then moderate over time. The compilation and analysis of this budget and performance information could lead to improved state and local government program efficiencies over time, potentially offsetting these costs.

SUMMARY OF FISCAL EFFECT

This measure would have the following major fiscal effects:

- Decreased state revenues and commensurate increased local revenues, probably in the range of about $200 million annually, beginning in 2013-14.
- Potential decreased state program costs or increased state revenues resulting from changes in the fiscal authority of the Legislature and Governor.
- Increased state and local costs of tens of millions of dollars annually to implement new budgeting practices. Over time, these costs would moderate and potentially be offset by savings from improved program efficiencies.

Sincerely,

Mac Taylor
Legislative Analyst

Ana J. Matosantos
Director of Finance