

Calif. ordering layoffs to cover \$15.4B deficit

SACRAMENTO—California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said May 14 that thousands of state employees must be laid off and billions of dollars must be slashed from the budget to deal with a deficit that tops \$15 billion and could widen again within days.

"I understand that these cuts are very painful and they affect real lives," Schwarzenegger said during a news conference. "This is the harsh reality and the reality that we face. Sacramento is not Washington—we cannot print our own money. We can only spend what we have."

The state approved billions in budget cuts and revenue increases earlier this year but they were not enough to keep up with a sharp drop in tax revenue as the recession batters the state's economy.

California still faces a deficit of \$15.4 billion in the fiscal year that starts July 1.

That will grow to \$21.3 billion if voters reject

budget-related measures during a special election next week.

The Republican governor released budget proposals that account for both deficit numbers and call for across-the-board cuts that will strike at the core of state services.

Starting Friday, May 15, the administration will send layoff notices to 5,000 state government employees, a move that is designed to cut the general work force by 5 percent but would take months to complete.

Funding for health and human services and the higher education system also would be cut.

If voters reject the ballot measures next week, as polls indicate they are inclined to do, education will be cut by a total of \$5.4 billion and the school year will be shortened by 7.5 days.

Schwarzenegger said the cuts will lead to teacher layoffs and larger class sizes.

Some Democrats argued that schoolchildren would be harmed.

"It's going to be pretty tough to be a child in the state of California after this," said Assemblywoman Noreen Evans of Santa Rosa.

Under the larger deficit, Schwarzenegger also proposed transferring illegal immigrants in the state prison system to federal custody.

His budget proposal will go to the Legislature, which has until June 15 to pass a spending plan, although the constitutional deadline is rarely met.

Critics said the governor was releasing his "May revise" budget proposal ahead of time as a scare tactic to persuade voters to support the special election ballot measures, nearly all of which are trailing in the polls.

Schwarzenegger and lawmakers called for the special election in February when they passed a two-year budget package, which they said at the time would solve California's deficit through June 2010.

That budget included \$15 billion in cuts, \$12.8 billion in temporary tax increases and \$11.4 billion in borrowing, but it has not been enough.

The Legislature's nonpartisan budget analyst warned recently that California could run out of cash as early as this summer.

Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, D-Los Angeles, said the drop in tax revenue was so severe that she couldn't fathom how next year's budget could be balanced with cuts alone.

The governor wants to sell state property, including the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and San Quentin State Prison, to raise \$600 million to \$1 billion over the next two to five years.

His plan calls for \$6 billion in borrowing and, under the worst-case scenario, taking \$2 billion from local governments, a move that would affect local police and fire departments.

The recession has taken a deep toll on California, which relies heavily on income tax and capital gains from the wealthy to fuel its government. (AP)

The upside of a downturn

PAGE A1 ◀

American Chamber of Commerce (USPAACC) aims to fulfill as it is set to stage next week CelebrAsian '09, the largest Asian American business opportunity conference in the United States.

"It is bad, but it is not that bad," remarked Susan Au Allen, national president and CEO of the USPAACC Education Foundation at a press briefing for the Asian American media held at the Time Warner Center Wednesday, May 13. "Asian American businesses have an opportunity to expand their markets through President Obama's economic stimulus plan, and they will learn about it at the conference," she added.

The conference, slated for May 20-22, aims to find out the growth areas and opportunities, best practices and strategic solutions for small and minority businesses in today's challenging marketplace. The 24th Anniversary CelebrAsian Business Opportunity Conference will be held at the New York Marriott at The Brooklyn Bridge in Brooklyn, New York.

"USPAACC Education Foundation has been at the forefront of education, training and nurturing Asian American suppliers and business owners since 1984, and CelebrAsian, our flagship event, provides valuable access, puts the spotlight on innovation, and sharpens their competitive edge to sustain growth in today's

challenging times," Allen added.

The conference theme, *Business beyond Boundaries: Turning Challenges into Opportunities—Follow the Money*, highlights how businesses could thrive in an economic downturn, where to find opportunities in the federal initiative on "green" energy, and strategy to win a piece of the Obama Administration's \$787 billion economic stimulus package.

"We started USPAACC because we wanted to create an organization that would help improve each community's economic standing so we, as Asian Americans, can collectively raise our voice," Allen shared.

As the oldest and largest pan-Asian American business opportunity conference in the country, CelebrAsian connects hundreds of top-caliber Asian American suppliers and business owners with buyers from Fortune 500 corporations, the federal government, and the small and minority business community, through pre-scheduled one-on-one matchmaking meetings, informative summits, workshops and networking events.

Featured speakers this year include PepsiCo International Vice Chairman and CEO Michael White, New York City Department of Small Business Services Commissioner Robert Walsh and Steve Tappin, co-author of the bestselling book *The Secrets of*

CEOs.

Tappin, who will be the featured speaker at the International CEO Forum on May 20, will share his unique insights based on his personal interviews with 150 global CEOs.

Sessions also include Follow the Money: Expand through the Stimulus Plan; Successful Marketing; Strategy for Growth; Guanxi Business Opportunity Fair (Guanxi is a commonly used business term meaning "connections" or "relationship"); Go Green: Opportunities for Green Suppliers; Strategic Alliances with Corporations and the Federal Government, among others.

"It is a little known fact that federal contracting is one of the largest in the world, with the federal government spending \$500 billion in contracts a year," Allen said.

The spotlight will also be placed on the success and achievements of outstanding Asian American businesses, through several special events during the conference, including the USPAACC Education Foundation/Wells Fargo Asian Business Leadership Awards, the Business Leaders and Scholarship Awards luncheon and the Excellence Awards Gala Dinner presenting the "Fast 50 Asian American Businesses."

For more information about CelebrAsian, visit www.uspaacc.com.

Poll: More Americans calling themselves pro-life

by DAVID CRARY
AP National Writer

NEW YORK—A Gallup Poll released Friday, May 15, found that 51 percent of Americans now call themselves pro-life rather than pro-choice on the issue of abortion, the first time a majority gave that answer in the 15 years that Gallup has asked the question.

The findings, obtained in an annual survey on values and beliefs conducted May 7-10, marked a significant shift from a year ago. A year ago, 50 percent said they were pro-choice and 44 percent pro-life—in the new poll, 42 percent said they were pro-choice.

The new survey showed that Americans remained deeply divided on the legality of abortion—with 23 percent saying it should

be illegal in all circumstances, 22 percent saying it should be legal under any circumstances, and 53 percent saying it should be legal only under certain circumstances.

The findings echoed a recent national survey by the Pew Research Center, which reported a sharp decline since last August in those saying abortion should be legal in all or most cases—from 54 percent to 46 percent.

Taken together, the two polls have elated anti-abortion activists, who had been stung by the November election results that placed President Barack Obama and other abortion-rights supporters in power in Washington.

"Ironically, Obama's radical abortion policies and nominees may have helped make Amer-

ica more pro-life," said Wendy Wright, president of the conservative advocacy group Concerned Women for America.

The Rev. Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the poll findings demonstrate that the anti-abortion cause "is a vibrant, growing, youthful movement."

Planned Parenthood also noted that another recent national survey, a CNN/Opinion Research Corp., poll in April, reported 49 percent of respondents identifying as pro-choice and 45 percent as pro-life.

The Gallup survey was based on telephone interviews with 1,015 adults nationwide. Its margin of sampling error was plus or minus 3 percentage points. ■

Music's newest sensation Charice debuts first single on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' on May 18

PAGE A1 ◀

winner, Diane Warren. Charice's performance is part of a special episode marking the finale of *Oprah's Search for the World's Smartest and Most Talented Kids*.

A bonafide internet sensation, Charice has racked up over 13 million hits online.

Charice was originally discovered by Oprah's producers

via her YouTube video which was filmed when she was 15 years old. She has toured with the *David Foster Friends* show in the US—including an appearance last weekend at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas where she received 17 standing ovations and was mobbed by fans. Charice is currently in the recording studio working on

her new 143/Reprise Records debut, scheduled for a late fall release.

Oprah's Search for the World's Smartest and Most Talented Kids includes other singing and dancing performances from young people who get to show off their best skills to a global audience. Check local listings for time and channel. ■



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