Brown’s budget funds education, public safety
Other services could face cuts

By TODD GUILD
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After a failed attempt last year to ask the California Legislature to approve a series of tax extensions aimed at filling the state’s budget deficit, Gov. Jerry Brown announced Thursday that he will take his proposed 2012-13 budget to voters in November.

In his plan, Brown has proposed a temporary half-cent hike in sales taxes and a temporary increase in income tax for people who make $250,000 or more.

The proposals, which expire in 2017, are expected to raise about $7 billion per year.

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But the plan comes with a caveat: If voters reject the plan, it will trigger $8.4 billion in additional cuts, on top of the $4.2 billion he has already proposed, which will likely force school districts to make drastic cuts.

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Before the issues get to voters, however, Brown is hoping that lawmakers will approve the $92 billion budget.

While his proposal seeks to put money in schools and keep public safety programs funded, it slashes funding for Social Security and cuts $750 million from the university systems. Also affected is funding for child care and the elderly.

“Brown’s budget was the best his staff could do,” he said at a press conference Thursday.

Still, Brown said the budget is the best his staff could do.

“The state of California government is a very generous, compassionate political jurisdiction,” he said. “But when we have to reduce our spending, that spending is going to come from programs that are doing good.”

Because fallout from the proposal won’t be felt until November, Pajaro Valley Unified School District Chief Business Officer Brett McFadden called Brown’s proposal a “wait-and-see budget” whose outcome will be either bad or “just OK.”

According to McFadden, the money generated will not mean additional revenue for schools. Instead, it will allow them to receive state payments in a more timely manner than in the past.

“Brown’s proposal got a mixed reception from lawmakers and policy watchdogs,” he said. “Yet the governor and his Democrat counterparts in the Legislature fiddle while working families are taxed into submission. It is irresponsible to assume that billions of dollars in new tax revenue will suddenly appear, while they move full-speed ahead on High-Speed Rail, a billion-dollar Cap and Tax scheme, and numerous unsustainable entitlement programs.”

Assemblyman Luis Alejo labeled the budget as a way to address the state’s economic recovery.

“This will be a year of somber choices,” he said in a press release. “I look forward to working with my constituents and colleagues in the Legislature over the coming months to produce a balanced, on-time budget with the best interests of California’s neediest people in mind.”

California Teachers Association President Dean Vogel pointed to $20 billion in cuts that have already hit schools in the past four years.

“The governor’s budget makes it crystal clear that California cannot cut its way out of its ongoing budget deficit,” he stated in a press release. “Additional revenue is the only way to protect public education and the essential public services that all Californians count on every day, and that millions of our students deserve.”