

Brown set stage for budget fight during campaign

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown set the stage for this budget fight more than a year ago.

The Democratic governor launched his campaign in March 2010 on a promise he would not raise taxes without a vote of the people. It was a way to disarm GOP attacks on taxes while embracing the popular notion of allowing voters to resolve the budget.



Lake Tahoe
Unified
teachers ready
to protest May
13 in
Sacramento.
Photo/Provided

The idea remains popular among the electorate, but it has complicated Brown's path toward a balanced budget as each month goes by without an election in place.

The specter of a public ratification has made it difficult for schools and others who rely on the state budget to prepare for the coming fiscal year. It also raises the possibility that lawmakers would have to revisit the budget this fall or winter

should voters reject taxes at the ballot, possibly delaying state payments and normal borrowing procedures.

“Hindsight is always 20/20,” said Adam Mendelsohn, an adviser to former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. “At the time, the pledge was very smart. It was an election that was really dominated across the country by fiscal conservatives.”

Already, major unions that support Democratic campaigns have come out against the ballot idea after offering tepid support earlier this year. Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez, D-Los Angeles, has also suggested that Brown pursue taxes without a public vote.

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