

Opinion: Withholding Lawmakers' pay the correct decision

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Controller John Chiang's bold decision to withhold pay for lawmakers because they passed an unbalanced budget could prompt a constitutional showdown for the ages.

Some lawmakers are already charging that Chiang's decision violates the constitutional separation of powers and sets a perilous precedent. Some are no doubt urging their leadership to take the controller to court.

Yet if lawmakers were to roll up their sleeves instead of rolling out the lawyers, they could avoid a public relations nightmare that would only further sully their reputations. By focusing on the budget instead of lawsuits, they could avert a costly game of chicken, quickly get their paychecks and – mostly importantly – help California right its fiscal ship.

Lawmakers, particularly Democrats, reacted strongly to Chiang's decision. Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez said the controller was allowing the GOP minority to control the budget process. Assemblyman Bob Blumenfeld, D-Woodland Hills, said Chiang “was acting without clear legal authority.”

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