

Public safety funding whacked by lawmakers in Calif. budget

By Kathryn Reed

With the California budget approved last week, it means \$84,305 is not coming to the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.

Statewide, Senate Bill 89 takes \$130 million in vehicle license fees away from cities. The money could be filtered back to cities and counties in the form of grants. However, it throws a wrench into the budgeting process.

South Lake Tahoe department heads are working out their respective budgets before the City Council starts the process of approving the 2011-12 budget that takes effect Oct. 1.

“From our review of the budget, we see one huge flaw in regards to the COPS (Citizens Option for Public Safety)/booking fee remediation funding issues. While it appears that these funding sources dried up, the Legislature did provide funding, in part, by raiding non-expiring VLF funding that goes to the cities for general purpose use,” police Capt. Martin Hewlett told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The result looks like that our budgeted items appear OK in that the Legislature has provided for those funding sources, but the city, in general, may see a loss in VLF funds in other areas. My information has not shown what those losses will be to our city.”

Reports are a lawsuit is likely to be filed either by the League of California Cities or another coalition of municipalities. The grounds would be under Proposition 22 which was approved by voters to prevent the state from taking local money.

Hewlett said Cal-Chiefs lobbyists, "Have been intensely involved in conversations with legislative leaders since last (week) in order to restore the original funding and to lessen the impact on the cities loss of VLF."