

Brown expands state auditor's powers, bans BPA in baby bottles, allows nonprofits to run state parks

By Patrick McGreevy and Anthony York, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – Gov. Jerry Brown on Tuesday gave the state auditor broad new powers to investigate the misuse of taxpayer funds by cities and counties, signing legislation created in the wake of the financial scandal in the city of Bell.

The governor also approved a bill allowing nonprofits to take over the operation of state parks that otherwise would be closed because of budget woes and a clutch of proposals intended to protect children. He vetoed a measure that would have allowed child-care workers to unionize.



Jerry Brown

The Bell-related measure by Assemblyman Ricardo Lara, D-Bell Gardens, whose district includes the tiny city, allows the auditor to launch an examination of local government agencies, including special districts, to determine whether they are at risk of fraud, waste or mismanagement.

“It is critical for the state to have the tools and authority to help flag gross mismanagement at the local level,” said

Evan Westrup, a spokesman for Brown.

The state auditor has an existing program to identify agencies at high risk of fraud or waste, but the law has limited it to state functions. The auditor could investigate local agencies only if directed to do so by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, as the panel did recently for the city of Vernon.

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