

Brown's pension package faces skeptical Legislature

By David Siders, Sacramento Bee

Even as Gov. Jerry Brown announced his plan Thursday to reduce pension benefits for public employees across the state, its prospects of passing intact appeared dim.

California's powerful labor interests objected to major parts of the plan, and the leaders of the Democratic-controlled Legislature – neither of whom attended Brown's announcement – reacted warily.

Brown said he thinks the Legislature will “rise to the occasion,” but even he wasn't sure of the outcome.

In the Legislature, he said, “There isn't a history of curbing pension benefits.”

Nevertheless, Brown promised pension changes in his campaign, and the proposal could blunt Republican criticism of his labor ties as he prepares next year to ask voters to raise taxes.

“He looks great asking for it,” said Thad Kousser, a political science professor at University of California, San Diego. “This is kind of like Obama's jobs bill. He can take a stand, even though he knows it may be dead on arrival.”

Brown proposed at a Capitol news conference increasing the retirement age for newly hired state and local government employees and offering them less generous retirement benefits, a package he will ask the Legislature to put before voters in November 2012.

Read the whole story