

California lagging behind other states in digging out of deficits

By David Siders, Sacramento Bee

The pile-on was in full effect within hours of Gov. Jerry Brown's announcement this week that California's budget deficit had grown to \$15.7 billion, with *The Week* giving its national audience a summary of the Golden State's financial affairs.

"California's financial apocalypse," the magazine offered. "A concise guide."

Fox News played the Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Californication," and host Greg Gutfeld proclaimed Brown captain of "the Titanic that is California, a state so broke it may ask Greece for a loan."

On Friday, the Democratic governor slapped back on national TV.

"This is not Europe," Brown told Charlie Rose on "CBS This Morning." "This is still the Wild West, and we're going to prove to the rest of this country and the world that we know how to do it."

For Brown – and California – it may be a tough sell.

Though no part of the country was immune from the effects of the recession, California's latest deficit projection comes as many other states begin to climb out of their own budget sloughs.

Fewer state budget deficits are being projected than in recent years, the National Conference of State Legislatures said in a

report this month, with revenue in most states meeting or exceeding expectations.

“This is good news for state lawmakers who have closed more than \$500 billion in budget gaps over the previous four fiscal years,” the report said.

As budget officials elsewhere were describing their financial situations as “cautiously optimistic” or “stable,” the Conference of State Legislatures said, California lawmakers “continue to cope with the state’s multibillion (dollar) gap between projected revenues and anticipated expenditures.”

On Friday, the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office said California’s deficit may be even larger than Brown’s latest projection, perhaps higher than \$17 billion. Though state revenue is growing, the amount is less than officials hoped.

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