

Water, prison, budget issues face Calif. lawmakers

By Melanie Mason and Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Time

SACRAMENTO – Returning to the Capitol on Monday after a four-month recess, state lawmakers are set to tackle water issues, prison overcrowding and a budget debate that will be shaped largely by the state's rosier economic outlook.

Other factors will also affect legislative decisions in 2014: election-year politics, internal leadership battles and a continuing federal corruption investigation into allegations that Sen. Ronald S. Calderon, D-Montebello, accepted bribes to exercise influence on bills.

Officials have predicted a \$2.2-billion surplus when the current fiscal year ends in June. The state's improved financial footing could set off new battles over whether to restore social services slashed during the recession or hold off on any significantly higher spending. Early budget proposals from legislative leaders have attempted to strike a balance. Gov. Jerry Brown will release his budget plan Friday.

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