

# Calif. lawmakers grapple with gas tax hike

By Jessica Calefati, Bay Area News Group

SACRAMENTO – Since taking office in 2011, Gov. Jerry Brown has helped to resolve some of California’s toughest fiscal challenges – mainly huge structural deficits and old, forgotten debts.

But this year he appears ready to take on Mission Impossible – getting Democrats and Republicans to agree to increase the state’s gas tax to fix California’s crumbling roads and bridges.

Hiking the gas tax has always been politically risky, especially in a state where cars are still king and that -gave birth to the anti-tax revolution in the late '70s.

But hell might be about to freeze over: For the first time in decades, even anti-tax Republicans are open to raising prices at the pump to start cutting into the state’s \$59 billion backlog of roadway maintenance.

Brown had telegraphed his intention to take up the issue in his January inaugural address when he asked Democrats and Republicans to do the “impossible” and craft an agreement to improve transportation infrastructure.

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