

versity's arts and lectures budget for intercultural speakers was going to throw in some money, along with the Office of the President and — believe it or not — a corporate sponsor, the Mission Federal Credit Union. Leftists don't mind so-called evil corporations that serve their interests, and neither, so it appears, does Michael Moore when he's enjoying spending their money in his corporate jet, drinking his Starbuck's lattes, or driving around in his limo.

**C**SU SAN MARCOS was determined to find the money to pay Moore by any means necessary ... until the College Pugilists caught wind of the scheme.

The San Marcos College Republicans, led by Chapter President Ashley Stuart and CCR Co-Chair Stephen Puetz, threw the "No Moore" lobby into overdrive. They campaigned against ASI on the grounds that (1) the school could not afford Moore's extravagant fee and (2) bringing Moore to campus hardly contributes to academic veracity or, without a counter-balancing conservative or Republican voice, to campus intellectual diversity. At first, the College Republicans made little progress. ASI surprised no one by voting 13 to 3 to allocate the funding. (The ASI president is the Palestinian-born ex-president of the Progressive Activist Network on campus who admits watching *Al-Jazeera* as her *primary* news source — no joke.)

The lefties and Moore's minions were fighting hard, but College Republicans were tenacious. They hit the newspapers, scheduled appearances on Rick

Roberts' radio talk show in San Diego, collected more than 150 signatures on a petition, appeared on the local CBS affiliate, and wrote a letter to University President Karen S. Haynes. We don't know what happened behind the scenes, but President Haynes put a brake on the Moore bandwagon in a September 13 e-mail:

"Universities are about the exchange of ideas." Haynes wrote. "Some ideas are uncomfortable, but being exposed to them is how we become confident in our own beliefs and values. That said, however, it is important that discussions be balanced. The University recognizes the need to present diverse points of view."

That stance is not at all typical of what we find at most universities. Moore's exclusive, pre-election appearance on campus remains a matter of intense lobbying and debate at California State University, San Marcos, but, for the moment anyway, it is off the schedule. One ding and a half — College Republicans so far are winning this round.

#### Keep on Swinging

And so it goes. The College Republican Pugilists confront Butterbean Moore and Leftie Academia at every turn, challenging leftist bias, conspiracy theories, and brainwashing with intellectual diversity and freedom of thought. The chant "USA, USA, USA!" will continue to send Butterbean Moore plummeting to the mat. And even when we lose, we gain some pretty well trained fighters for our cause in a battle of ideas that we will fight to the finish.

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## THE LAW

# There they go again

*State courts a lawsuit with its borrowing binge for puffed-up pensions.*

H A R O L D J O H N S O N

**W**as it Freud, Jung — or maybe Professor Irwin Corey ("the world's foremost authority") — who defined "insanity" as "trying the same thing over and over again and expecting different results"?

As part of the 2004 state budget, California law-

makers included a pension-funding scheme that's a clone of one that was ruled illegal just 12 months ago. The new plan is to float up to \$2 billion in long-term

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bonds ... without voter approval. That's the same as the old plan: Last year's formula for \$2 billion in "pension obligation bonds" also ignored the electorate. Consequently, last year's bonds were struck down by a Sacramento Superior Court judge.

The state constitution isn't vague on these matters: Article 16, section 1 says the state can't borrow more than \$300,000 without approval by voters at a statewide election. This sensible rule is meant to give taxpayers a say in fiscal matters, and to deter politicians from becoming addicted to debt.

**S**TATE OFFICIALS offer a neat excuse for dispensing with constitutional restraints when it comes to the funding of pensions. Financing a pension system is itself a constitutional requirement, they point out. Therefore, they argue, they shouldn't be obstructed by procedural hurdles, even one that has been in the state constitution since 1849. In other words, the defense of "necessity" and "efficiency." It's an ominous line of reasoning; followed down its logical path, it would permit state pols to ignore other taxpayer protections that proved inconvenient. For example, new taxes could be foisted on us without a two-thirds vote of legislators as long as the proceeds were earmarked for government retirees.

If, as is likely, this year's no-vote bonds meet the same fate in court as last year's no-vote bonds, the public might be stuck with the litigation costs. A court could order the state to reimburse the successful challengers for their attorneys' fees.

The dubious purpose of the bonds also deserves attention: To prop up a gold-plated retirement system. Nationwide, pension plans covering 16 million state and local government employees "owe an incredible \$366 billion more in pension benefits to current and future retirees than the money stashed away to pay for them," according to *Fortune* magazine, citing Wilshire Associates, a Santa Monica-based pension consultancy. California politicians have been in the thick of the race to buy favor from government unions with benefits that often far out-

strip those available in private employment.

A typical private-sector employee must monitor the performance of his 401-K account, in the hope that it will eventually grow large enough to yield income for

a decent retirement. Government employees, in California and many other states, don't have that worry. They enjoy "defined benefit" plans that guarantee retirement checks at prescribed, predetermined levels (often with annual inflation adjustment), regardless of how the stock market or other financial instruments perform over the years.

California lawmakers are resorting to borrowing because the payouts that have been promised to government workers have become unaffordable without deep cuts in other programs or significant new taxes.

The California Public Employees Retirement System supports 816 people who make more than \$100,000 a year in pension payments, and the California State Teachers Retirement System has 427 such people, according to the *Los Angeles Daily News*. A new tier in the pension system for public-safety workers provides payments at 90 percent of an employee's salary after 33 years.

State Sen. Tom McClintock, R-Thousand Oaks, points out that, "The average family, who probably doesn't have a pension of their own, will pay \$300 in taxes next year just to support the state's public pension system." If you remember how the Soviet Union operated, you might be reminded of the *nomenklatura*: the privileged class who lived in an exalted social stratum, with benefits unavailable to people who weren't linked up with the government and the Party.

Reining in public-sector pensions — by having new hires make do with 401-K accounts like the rest of us — is essential if the state is going to stave off fiscal ruin in the long run. It might also end what may be becoming an annual exercise: judges throwing key portions of the state's fiscal plan out the window as unconstitutional.

As Professor Irwin Corey warned, "If we don't change direction soon, we'll end up where we're going."

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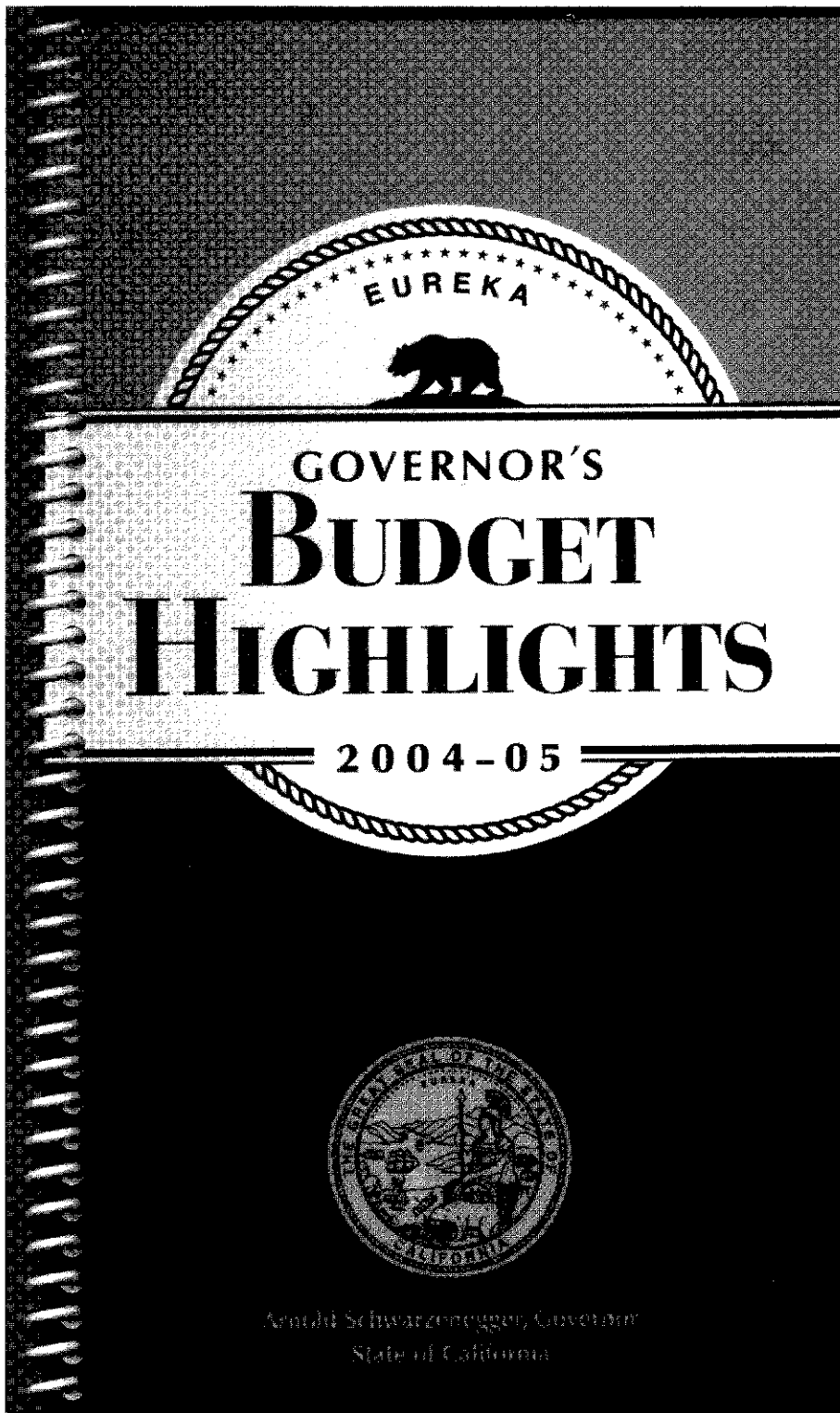
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**BUDGET**

# **ENDGAME**



**The 04-05 budget: Republicans held the line on tax and fee increases, achieved a degree of protection for local governments, kept spending increases down ... *and* engaged the governor in the electoral process.**

**Ray Haynes**