



NEWS

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas L.A. County Board of Supervisors, 2nd District

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SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS CALLS FOR LOWERING TWO-THIRDS STATE BUDGET THRESHOLD AMONG HIS PROPOSALS TO EASE BURDENS ON COUNTY RESIDENTS

LOS ANGELES – Acting on a motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Board of Supervisors today endorsed reducing the two-thirds vote requirement needed to pass a state budget – a threshold the Supervisor said has impeded efforts in the Legislature to deal with a fiscal crisis that is threatening county services.

Rhode Island and Arkansas are the only other states that require a two-thirds vote. As the only Board member who recently served in the Legislature, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said the two-thirds requirement has created a “tyranny of the minority” in Sacramento and unyielding partisanship that has resulted in late budgets nearly every year.

The Supervisor’s motion, approved on a 3-2 vote, instructs the county chief executive officer to work with the county’s lobbyists in Sacramento to reduce the threshold, a change that would require voters to amend the state Constitution.

Since the passage of Proposition 13, the state has been largely reliant on revenues from personal income and capital gains taxes, which are most negatively affected by economic downturns. The 1978 ballot measure, the Supervisor said, “restricted the ability to address the state’s dramatic swings in revenue and voter-approved obligations to fund a variety of government programs and services including public education.”

The Supervisor said partisanship in the Legislature make it virtually impossible for the Legislature to approve a balanced budget on time with nominal bi-partisan support and without resorting to borrowing and accounting gimmicks, reductions in core services, and/or escalating fees and taxes.

Delays in finalizing the state budget, in turn, severely distort the County's budget process by prolonging it and creating uncertainty. For vendors, contractors and service providers, many of whom are small businesses and non-profit agencies, such uncertainty hampers their desire and ability to conduct business with state and local government.

Inter-Jurisdictional Purchasing Agreements

During today's county budget hearing, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said the County must explore all possible options to minimize the impact of forecasted reductions and maintain operating efficiencies.

In a separate motion approved by the Board, he called for greater inter-jurisdictional coordination in the purchase of services to achieve savings by leveraging the purchasing power of the County as well as the market power of the multi-jurisdictional collaboration.

In private industry, cooperatives and associations are formed to increase negotiating and buying power. Currently the County participates in a national cooperative purchasing program for goods and commodities.

"The County should also explore similar partnerships with other public entities such as the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and other municipalities within the County to achieve savings for purchases of specialized services such as health care insurance rates, especially as industry experts have been projecting an increase in health care costs," the Supervisor said.

Arts Intern Program

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas also urged the Board to allocate \$500,000 in one-time funding to ensure the County's Arts Internship is not eliminated next summer. He said during its decade of existence the program has proven to be an investment into the economic viability of communities and served as a job training program.

Administered by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, the program provides paid internships for undergraduate students in the non-profit performing, presenting, literary and municipal arts organizations.

Over the course of ten weeks, the program provides the students with meaningful, relevant and practical experience working in the arts arena, while at the same time gives the participating organization the assistance of new staff to further the goals and missions of its organization.

The Program has developed leaders in the arts sector and has also instilled a deep appreciation of arts and public service in almost 1,300 past participants. This summer, the program has placed 125 interns with 95 participating organizations.

Past participants have become leaders in the various discipline areas associated with the arts from both the creative and business aspects, as well as in policy development in the government and public policy sectors.

“We must continue to provide these opportunities for our youth and the Arts Internship Program is a shining example of how government, public and non-profit entities can work together to build our future,” the Supervisor said.

Funding for the program, he said, “should also be viewed as an investment into the economic viability of our community in addition as a job training program. One of the main priorities of the County is the development and training of youth, as evidenced in some of the youth job-training programs we have developed Countywide, and this should be equally as important.”

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