

# California Democratic Governor enacts “trigger cuts,” promising continued austerity

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On December 14, California Governor Jerry Brown announced “trigger cuts” to the state’s budget as a result of the collection of less than anticipated revenue at the close of 2011. The cuts, beginning on January 1, will slash nearly \$1 billion from vitally needed social services.

These cuts include \$330 million from school budgets, \$248 million of which will be slashed from school bus programs. While Brown contends that school districts, facing multimillion-dollar deficits of their own, will be able to pay for bus service out of their reserves, most analysts agree that the cuts will mean an end to school bus service in many areas.

The Los Angeles Unified School District alone is to absorb \$38 million in cuts to its bus program. LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy declared, “We have nothing left for transportation.”

A total of \$100 million will also be cut from the In Home Support Services program, which allows appointed workers and family members to care for the elderly and infirm in their homes. An additional \$100 million is also to be taken from services for the developmentally disabled, which include specialized medical care, counseling and job training.

In addition to \$1.3 billion in cuts enacted at the start of the 2011-2012 fiscal year, the University of California and California State University systems will absorb \$100 million in additional cuts as well. The announcement has prompted university officials to promise additional tuition increases and reductions in course offerings.

Governor Brown has himself made clear that there will be billions more in cuts to higher education and other programs in 2012, the details of which will likely be released by the governor next month. “We will have more cuts—far more than \$1 billion—and they’ll be to the same kind of state services,” said Brown, adding, “This is not the way we’d like to run California, but we have to live within our means.”

An attempt is also being made by the governor to secure an initiative on the November ballot to raise taxes, mainly directed at the working class, by more than \$6 billion. Voters are being threatened with further cuts should the initiative die either at the ballot box or in Sacramento.

Last July, the state passed over \$15 billion in cuts, which came on top of \$7.8 billion in cuts enacted for fiscal year 2010-2011. The cuts are part of a deliberate policy to eliminate social programs, won through decades of working class struggle.

The elimination of school busing is only the latest and by no means the last victim of this policy.

During the 2010-2011 school year, over 6.2 million children attended public K-12 schools in California. About 1.5 million of these rely on school bus transportation.

In response to criticism of these cuts, Governor Brown callously remarked, “The state cannot give what it does not have. And there’s been a lot of obfuscation and gimmickry, and I’ve reduced that to a minimum... I don’t want to rely on pushing the problem further down the road.”

according to his profile in Forbes.

The state's failure to provide busing bars access to a free public education and endangers children. For many working families, busing is the only way for children to get to school.

In a recent interview with the *World Socialist Web Site*, Nolan, a parent of two elementary school children in rural Madera County, said, "My kids get bussed to school. So far we are lucky and bus service remains an option. Walking to school isn't possible because the school is 10 miles away. That means a 30-minute round trip commute every morning and every afternoon. If busing is cut, in practical terms for our family, it means one spouse can't work during the week, unless one had a super flexible employer."

The universal claim by politicians in Sacramento is that there is simply no money for vital social programs like school busing. However, for a small layer of Californians, \$248 million, the amount slashed from the state busing program, is a small amount of their personal wealth.

These include Donald Bren, owner of the Irving Company, a commercial real estate owner. Bren's net worth as of September 2011 was \$12 billion. Other Californians living in this rarefied layer include Facebook found Mark Zuckerberg, net worth of \$13.5 billion; biotech investor Patrick Soon-Shiong, net worth of \$7 billion; Google Co-Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, each with a net worth of \$19.8 billion; and Oracle CEO Larry Ellison, the world's fifth richest individual with a net worth of \$39.5 billion.

One such member of this elite club, George Roberts, recently listed his San Benito River Valley home at an asking price of \$32 million. Justluxe.com describes the property as "over 10,000 acres of premium vineyard, agricultural and grazing land."

Roberts accrued his more than \$3 billion in estimated net worth largely through leveraged buyouts. As a partner of the leveraged buyout firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts, Roberts used junk bonds to "buy underperforming companies, refine operations, [i.e. layoff thousands of workers] and flip them for profit,"



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