

STATE BUDGET

Gov. Jerry Brown on Wednesday signed the \$115.4 billion general fund budget lawmakers passed last week, issuing only a handful of line item vetoes valued at \$1.3 million.

The annual spending plan will increase spending on state-funded preschool and universities and expand Medi-Cal coverage to undocumented children starting in May 2016.

Brown's signature was never in doubt. The Democratic governor and legislative leaders announced a budget deal last week, and rank-and-file lawmakers ratified it Friday. The spending plan replaced a more expansive budget lawmakers put forward earlier this month, knowing Brown would reject it but racing to meet a June 15 deadline to pass a budget or give up pay.

In line-item vetoes, Brown made small deletions or modifications in several budget areas, including funding language that authorized the Department of Finance to approve up to \$15 million for the relinquishment of the Tower Bridge to the cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento. It was not a straight appropriation, and the administration did not include it in the total value of line-item vetoes.

"I support efforts to relinquish portions of the State Highway System that no longer serve an interregional purpose and would be better managed by local government entities, including the Tower Bridge," Brown wrote. "However, provisions contained in the omnibus transportation trailer bill and existing processes already allow for the relinquishment of the Tower Bridge, if an agreement is reached between the State and applicable cities...I do not support using the budget process to circumvent this negotiation process."

The budget's enactment comes a week before the July 1 start of the next fiscal year. But Brown and the Democratic-controlled Legislature still have significant work to do outside the budget process. Brown called a special session last week to address funding shortfalls in health care, roads and infrastructure.

In addition, Brown and lawmakers have yet to resolve a dispute over how to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in cap-and-trade revenue, money polluters pay to offset carbon emissions.

Unlike last year, when he used the budget signing to promote his re-election campaign, Brown signed this year's budget without fanfare.

Brown posted a photograph on Twitter of him meeting with Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, D-San Diego, and Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León, D-Los Angeles.

“Budget signed,” he wrote. “Onto the healthcare & transportation special sessions.”

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