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2011 State Priorities

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Legislative Priorities

#1: Pursue property tax inequity fix as part of realignment

Yolo County has the lowest property tax allocation in the state, yet is required to provide the same mandated services as other counties. Yolo County receives 8.7 cents of every property tax dollar, while counties on average receive 17 cents. When the City of West Sacramento incorporated, all of the sales tax and most of the property tax revenues were transferred to the city. When the state calculated the Education Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF), an error in the base year used to determine shift amounts included West Sacramento's property tax in Yolo County's shift amount (new cities were exempt from ERAF shifts). Yolo County seeks to fix this error, or otherwise make up the property tax revenue difference as part of the Governor's realignment proposal.

#2: Support legislation to renew the VLF public safety increment

Yolo County will advocate for a renewal of the existing vehicle license fee increment that funds important public safety and law enforcement services programs, including prevention and intervention services for juvenile offenders, Citizens' Options for Public Safety and Rural and Small County Sheriffs Assistance grants, and funding for prosecution related to elder abuse, career criminals, major narcotic cases, and statutory rape in the District Attorney's Office. Yolo County will lose approximately \$2 million in annual revenue if the Legislature does not renew this funding. More importantly, there would be an increase in crime and associated system costs resulting from increased recidivism and reduced prosecution.

#3: Sponsor legislation to forgive Yolo County for retroactively-denied claims for local mental health services

Yolo County has audited state general fund liabilities of approximately \$3.8 million for retroactively denied claims to the state Department of Mental Health for local mental health services provided between fiscal years 2002-03 and 2005-06. Yolo County's mental health department has made significant improvements to its billing procedures, but costly settlements to resolve past billing discrepancies could undermine this progress. The County will advocate for forgiveness of the state portion of retroactively denied claims.

#4: Support legislation to adjust local fees set by the state that fail to cover Yolo County costs

Yolo County could increase general fund revenue by approximately \$100,000 per year if allowed to adjust some local fees not included in SB 676 (Wolk, 2009) to reflect the actual costs of providing services. For instance, adjustments to birth and death records fees would compensate for the state's failure to enact necessary cost-of-living

adjustments. Staff from the California State Association of Counties will recommend that the Association sponsor legislation in 2011-12.

#4: Sponsor legislation to extend the sunset date of the CCRMP to 2026

State legislation is required to extend the sunset date for the California Public Resources Code section that authorizes the CCRMP until 2012. Yolo County will advocate for an extension of the sunset date to 2026—to coincide with the expiration of four of the permits necessary to operate the Cache Creek Area Plan.

State Agency Priorities

#1: Advocate for change to state Department of Mental Health definition of a small county from 200,000 people to 250,000 people

Yolo County's population is expected to officially surpass 200,000 when the 2010 Census is finalized. If the state Department of Mental Health includes Yolo County in the medium county category, the County would lose funding available only to small counties and face an increased administrative workload that medium counties hire additional staff to complete. If the population threshold is increased to 250,000 people, it will only affect Yolo County and Butte County.

#2: Support efforts to transfer Proposition 63 funds expeditiously from the state Department of Mental Health to critical county programs and services

The state Department of Mental Health is withholding significant funding from Proposition 63 that was designated for county mental health departments and is drawing interest pending plan approvals, rather than releasing funds to counties and allowing them to earn interest while awaiting approval of plans. Yolo County will advocate for expeditious transfer of Proposition 63 funds to counties, including minimizing administrative burdens on counties to secure funding where feasible. The Yolo County Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Department is currently required by the state Department to complete six different plans to receive funding in different Proposition 63 categories.

#3: Advocate for written determination from the Department of Mental Health that the County can use Mental Health Service Act funds to integrate local mental health services.

Advocate for written confirmation that MHSA resources can be used for integration as the current crumbling mental health system continues to be transformed to a community-based, non-institutional, culturally appropriate, service-driven system. The former state Department of Mental Health director stated verbally that county departments can budget an increased percentage of the funds to assist with the integration of existing "core" programs and MHSA programs into one system, as was intended by the Act. Local departments need this affirmation of this policy change in writing to support current claims during future state cost report audits. Recently the state's audits have trailed about five years behind.

Delta Priorities

#1: Advocate for the expenditure of \$5 million in funds appropriated to the Department of Water Resources to improve Delta emergency communications

Yolo County successfully advocated for a \$5 million appropriation for Delta emergency communications improvements in SB 2x1 (Perata, 2008). Yolo County will advocate that DWR allocate these funds in 2011 once the Delta Multi-Hazard Coordination Task Force created pursuant to SB 27 (Simitian, 2008) finalizes its recommendations for priority Delta emergency communications improvements. The Delta Stewardship Council voted in November to support expeditious allocation of this funding in 2011.

#2: Secure funding outside the state General Fund for payment of fees in-lieu of property taxes for lands acquired by the state

Past public acquisitions for habitat conservation and flood control have significantly reduced revenue available to local governments to provide services. The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) owes Yolo County close to \$1 million for fees in-lieu of property taxes owed on the nationally-renowned Vic Fazio Yolo Wildlife Area. Despite statutory language requiring payment, the DFG has not paid since 2001. Yolo County supports creation of a funding source outside of the General Fund to pay existing and future obligations for state-owned land.

#3: Secure funding for implementation of SB 27 Delta emergency preparedness recommendations.

Yolo County actively supported the passage of SB 27 (Simitian) in 2008, which established a task force to develop Delta emergency preparedness recommendations. Yolo County supports allocating existing bond or other funds to implement the task force's recommendations in the 2011-12 budget, including funding for California Emergency Management Agency staff to lead implementation efforts.

#4: Secure a significant role in Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)

Work with the Delta Counties Coalition and the Resources Agency to secure a significant role in the ongoing development of the BDCP, to the extent the process continues, including increased local government participation and public outreach in the BDCP process. Yolo County supports establishment of a BDCP implementation entity that has local government representation and is as closely aligned with institutions established by the 2009 Delta Reform Act as possible.

#5: Advocate for funding to develop the Westside Option

Assist the Yolo Basin Foundation with efforts to secure funding to further develop the Westside Option, a potential alternative to the current BDCP proposal to flood the east side of the Yolo Bypass more frequently to provide habitat for endangered salmon and splittail.

#6: Support "beneficiary pays" legislation for Delta water projects

Yolo County supports legislation similar to AB 2092 (Huffman), which failed passage in 2010, to ensure that beneficiaries of any projects in the Delta to improve the state's water supply pay for their share of the projects. Yolo County also supports other means through which to secure funding to compensate for the impact of BDCP proposals on local government revenue, local economies, and individual landowners, including funding outside the state General Fund where possible.

#7: Eliminate or reduce local government match for economic assistance in the water bond

Subject to voter approval, Senate Bill 7X-2 authorizes up to \$750 million for a host of water supply, levee improvement, and similar regional projects that provide "public benefits and support Delta sustainability." It also authorizes, but does not require, up to \$250 million of this sum to be allocated for "assistance to local governments and the local agricultural economy due to the loss of productive agricultural lands for habitat and ecosystem restoration within the Delta." The allocation of monies pursuant to these provisions is capped at 50 percent. This leaves local governments in the impractical position of having to cover at least one-half the cost of any economic "assistance" needed as a consequence of such restoration projects. Most, if not all, local governments will be unable to bridge this gap and will thus be left with no state assistance. Yolo County will pursue this change to the water bond, as well as other potential changes that compensate local jurisdictions for the impact of Delta proposals.