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A good proposal? Answer depends on who you ask

GOP optimistic; Democrats worry about poor, disabled and students

By **LARRY MITCHELL**
Staff Writer

The responses of Republican and Democratic legislators to Gov. Schwarzenegger's budget plan Friday were like day and night.

Many Republicans saw a bright day of fiscal responsibility, fairness and future prosperity.

Many Democrats saw a gloomy night of fiscal unfairness, poor children and disabled people cut off from health care, and students' training disrupted at community colleges.

Assemblyman Rick Keene, R-Chico, called the

SIDES: GOP and Democrats differ

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budget plan "a balanced approach to help alleviate the financial crisis we inherited."

"This proposal helps us make certain that the Legislature never again places California's families and our economy in jeopardy," said Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa, R-Richvale.

State Sen. Sam Aanestad, R-Grass Valley, stated in a news release, "It's a good budget. I think it shows the governor has committed to taking care of the people of California, providing the services the taxpayers are paying for and taking care of those who really need the help government can give them."

State Sen. Jim Brulte, R-Cucamonga, echoed the sentiments of many of his GOP colleagues when he praised Schwarzenegger for proposing no new taxes. More taxes are the wrong way to go — they will only hamper the state's economic growth, he said.

Democratic legislators declared that Schwarzenegger's plan would hurt poor people who depend on Medi-Cal for health coverage, people on welfare and students.

"The poor and the working class ought not to take the burden of these cuts," said state Sen. Deborah Ortiz, D-Sacramento.

The governor said all Californians should have to bear some pain in helping the state out of its budget crisis, said Sen. Liz Figueroa, D-Fremont, but "the wealthy of California aren't participating in the sacrifice as of now."

Beth Capell of Health Access, a coalition of consumer groups,

BUDGET REACTIONS:

Republican legislators said the governor's budget plan will put the state on track toward prosperity. Many Democrats worried about the effects on poor people of proposed cuts to Medi-Cal and other health and welfare programs.



Aanestad

Keene said he wasn't sure if child-care funds through welfare would be cut.

Actually, he said, people need to remember that what was proposed Friday is just the first

step. There will be a lot of discussion and probably many changes before a final budget is developed later this year.

What is needed, said Keene, who is vice chair of the Assembly Budget Committee, is an honest and compassionate exploration of what services people are entitled to, what the state can afford, and who should be responsible for paying the costs.

said the proposed cuts in Medi-Cal reimbursements would mean more doctors will stop accepting such payments, and patients from Butte County would have to travel to Sacramento for specialty care. Clinics that serve Medi-Cal patients would be cut and certain public-health programs for low-income people would lose some of their funding.

Fawn Dorman of Chico, a single mother with four young children, told the Enterprise-Record she was worried about the impact the budget cuts might have on her future.

She's studying at Butte College to be a social worker. She relies on government money for child care for her kids, whose ages range from 2 to 12. She was heading for Oakland this weekend for a conference on parents' rights, sponsored by Lifetime, a group that advocates for parents on welfare.

Dawn Love of Hayward, an organizer for Lifetime and a single parent on welfare, said she gets money for transportation, child care and books and supplies through the Cal Works program so she can attend Chabot College. If those funds are cut, she could have to quit school, she said.

Love said Lifetime plans a rally in the Capitol Monday to protest proposed cuts.