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### California cities launch ad campaign to protect redevelopment agencies

March 7, 2011 | 11:33 am

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Cities have launched a statewide ad blitz and signature-gathering campaign urging legislators to protect California's roughly 400 municipal redevelopment agencies from Gov. Jerry Brown's proposal to eliminate them.

Brown is recommending that the \$5 billion a year in property taxes that the agencies run on be sent to schools, counties and the state instead.

"Any day now, the state politicians will vote on a budget that takes redevelopment away from our cities," said the ad, which called the move "a scheme" that will "put thousands more out of work."

The ad campaign comes as state Controller John Chiang [released a report Monday](#) finding that city redevelopment agencies illegally shortchanged schools by more than \$40 million last year while spending millions of dollars in public money on such things as luxury golf courses.

**Times' Data Desk:** [How is your redevelopment agency spending money?](#)

Not to be outdone by the cities, the California Professional Firefighters and the California School Employees Assn. put up funds for a countercampaign on radio stations in Sacramento. "While deputies are facing layoffs, fire stations are closing and local school funding is slashed, redevelopment agencies are spending taxpayer money for stadiums, parking garages and 'mermaid bars,'" one radio ad said.

Behind the scenes, cities continued their rush to shield redevelopment money from the state, with the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency holding another emergency meeting Monday morning -- at such an early hour that one activist showed up in a bathrobe as a form of protest. At the meeting, officials pledged \$100 million more for housing projects, parks and shopping centers in an attempt to keep the money out of the state's reach.

That is on top of more than \$900 million that the agency pledged last month for a laundry list of projects.

The state Legislature could vote on the budget as soon as this week, and many observers believe redevelopment could be killed, despite the furious lobbying of the traditionally powerful California Redevelopment Assn. and the League of California Cities.

[Chiang's report](#), which was completed in just five weeks, further fuels the argument that redevelopment is sucking up precious funds with little to show in return.

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Shut them down. Too many redevelopment agencies in California are being used as personal "piggy banks" by cities.

This "borrowing from Peter to pay Paul" by our state government has to stop. Just check out the data chart... Alhambra has \$12 million and did nothing with it, Anaheim has \$220 million and did nothing with it, Antioch has \$10 million and did nothing with it, and so on.

All these millions add up. If these cities aren't going to use the money legally on things like "low income housing"... then take it away and give it to the schools or the state.

**Posted by: S.G. | March 07, 2011 at 01:10 PM**

The construction industry is the worst when it comes to hiring illegal immigrants. The loss of jobs will no doubt cause the illegal immigrants to lose theirs. The association between L.A. community college district and their favorite contractors may be similar to the association between the cities and their favorite contractors. In either relationship, competitors are shut out and costs are marked up or exorbitant.

**Posted by: bob | March 07, 2011 at 02:32 PM**

If there were a true investigation of how these cities use the redevelopment funds there would be quite a bit of work for the courts with all the misappropriation of funds charges. The cities waste this money on frivolous items with little or no return for the actual residents. It's sink or swim time for the city's.

**Posted by: arty | March 07, 2011 at 03:00 PM**

I am sure they want to protect their own slush fund so would any corrupt official we really need to clean up our act and start putting these jokers in prison before they get out of control!

**Posted by: shadowpark | March 07, 2011 at 03:22 PM**

#1 where are the criminal indictments?

#2 Hahaha- surprise surprise - government work blowing taxpayer monies? This is news?

**Posted by: dangermouse | March 07, 2011 at 03:56 PM**

Redevelopment agencies (RA's) have become total taxpayer scams. They were invented as a way for cities to reduce urban blight by seizing run-down properties from neglectful owners and installing more community-friendly facilities.

Unfortunately, as happens with so many well-intended government programs, things quickly went horribly wrong. Development companies started using local governments and RA's as tools to benefit the development company at the expense of taxpayers. As long as they can get away with these scams, local governments love them because the resulting higher property values increase their tax base.

This is all at the expense of taxpayers, residents, and thriving local businesses that are gobbled up by these sordid affairs.

**Posted by: Get Planted | March 07, 2011 at 04:34 PM**

I disagree. With all the good things that some cities have done with redevelopment monies, they get forgotten. Sales tax revenues and jobs that were created from new projects brought in by the city/redevelopment agency result in a better economy for the State. Sales tax pays for police and fire.

Not all cities are bad. Some are really good and have been thrown into the fire because of other cities. Redevelopment is a good tool. Perhaps reform is necessary to prevent abuse and to ensure funds are spent within the local communities. Once funds go to the State, we residents won't see a penny.

Where does all our State taxes go right now? What does it pay for? I have no clue? Medicare? CHP? DMV? CALTRANS? It seems that DMV and gas tax already pay for street improvements. So what does the State really do for us?

At least I can see improvements and services provided for within my city. If the problem is abuse, then our residents need to hold our local politicians accountable. State politicians have no accountability. We won't see any improvements to the State Budget and to local services if we allow the State to eliminate redevelopment agencies. What plans does the state have to create jobs? Not one! We can restrict as much as we want, but I believe in investing into a local economy to improve the economy,

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Posted by: Dennis | March 07, 2011 at 05:49 PM

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