

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

Valley's representatives debate budget solutions

Nestande, Emmerson against tax hike; Vargas says invest in future

BY ERICA FELCI
The Desert Sun

The debate that caused a budget stalemate in Sacramento came to Palm Desert on Friday, when three local lawmakers discussed the state's effort to close a \$26.6 billion deficit.

Assemblyman Brian Nestande and Sens. Juan Vargas and Bill Emmerson expressed optimism that the Legislature will move beyond its current impasse and pass a budget.

But they argued creating a lasting solution requires lawmakers to take up politically

difficult topics such as reforming the public employees' pension system and streamlining the state's environmental regulations.

"California needs stability, and we need to get California back on track," Emmerson, a Republican from Hemet, told the 150-person crowd.

"We can get there. California needs us to get there."

Friday's legislative breakfast event was sponsored by the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership.

The desert's fourth lawmaker, Democratic Assem-

blyman V. Manuel Pérez, did not attend but was represented by a staff member.

Friday's event comes as the Legislature debates a budget plan Gov. Jerry Brown first unveiled in January.

The multifaceted plan includes \$12.5 billion in spending cuts, a realignment of government services that gives cities and counties more authority and convincing voters to pass a five-year extension of current tax increases.

The Legislature approved and Brown has signed more than \$11 billion in solutions.

Brown needs every Democrat and at least four Republicans to approve some of the most controversial parts of

his plan.

Until Brown ended negotiations this week, the Democratic governor had been in talks with Emmerson and four other senators, dubbed the GOP Five.

Now, it is not clear if and when legislative leaders will secure enough votes to hold a special election on the tax proposal.

The Legislature also is stalled on the proposed elimination of redevelopment agencies — an idea that's strongly opposed by Riverside County's leadership and most of the desert's city officials.

Nestande said state lawmakers should be focused on long-term budget cuts, not



Nestande



Emmerson



Vargas

to have a lower government spending."

Vargas sees it differently.

While saying the state should "make significant cuts," the Democrat

one-time fixes or additional taxes.

"Higher taxes, I think, is going to be going the wrong way. It's not going to help this economy," the Republican from Palm Desert said Friday.

"We need to actually be realistic about our budget, realize we cannot afford the California that we've had for these years prior and we have

from San Diego supports the proposed tax extension in order to avoid even deeper reductions for priority programs.

"How do you invest in your future? Schools, education, training — those things cost money, and someone's got to pay for it," Vargas said.

"You have to invest in education and in our future. If not, you're going to see a very tragic California."

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

today

Coachella Valley Hiking Club, moderate 6 miles with 700-ft. elevation. Entrance fee to Living Desert required. 8 a.m., Eisenhower Loop, Palm Desert. (760) 408-1000

"Old Cats" film screening, 9:15 a.m., Camelot Theatres, 2300 E. Baristo Road, Palm Springs. \$15. (760) 772-2999 or www.desertfilmsociety.com

5K Walk-4-Life fundraiser, 9:30 a.m., Palm Desert Civic Center Park, 43-900 San Pablo Avenue, Palm Desert. (760) 574-1758

Spring plant sale benefiting The Living Desert, 9:30 a.m., The Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert. (760) 346-5694 or www.livingdesert.org

Virginia Waring International Piano Competition Junior master class, 9:30 a.m., Indian Wells Theater, 37-500 Cook Street, Palm Desert. Free. (760) 773-2575 or www.vwipc.org

A Course In Miracles lecture and discussion, 10 a.m., Shields Date Garden & Cafe, 80-225 Highway 111, Indio. Free. (760) 564-4853

Del Web Classic Car Show, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Sun City Shadow Hills, 80-814 Sun City Blvd., Indio. Free. (760) 772-9617

P.S. 101: Craig Ellwood lecture by Bill Butler, 10 a.m., Palm Springs Art Museum, 101 Museum Drive, Palm Springs. \$25. (760) 322-4800

LifeStream blood donation drive, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Harley Davidson, 19-465 N. Indian Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. (800) 879-4484

Author Charles Churchward book signing and reception, 2 p.m., Just Fabulous, 515 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. (760) 864-1300

Virginia Waring International Piano Competition intermediate master class, 2 p.m., Indian Wells Theater, 37-500 Cook Street, Palm Desert. Free. (760) 773-2575 or www.vwipc.org

Palm Springs Cruisin' Association cruise night, show cars \$5. 4-8 p.m., Spa Resort Casino, 401 E. Amado Road, Palm Springs. Free. (760) 447-7584 or www.palmspringscruisinassociation.com

Soroptimist community spaghetti dinner fundraiser, with music by Benjamin Franklin School. Proceeds benefiting House of hope. 5-7 p.m., La Quinta Senior Center, 78-450 Avenida La Fonda, La Quinta. \$5-\$10. (815) 541-0666

Reception for Judy Nemer Sklar solo exhibition "Conversations in Color," 6-9 p.m., I.M.A.G.E.S. by Gideon Art Gallery, Backstreet Art District, 2682 Cherokee Way, Palm Springs. Free. (760) 250-1521

Reception for several artists,

6 p.m., I.M.A.G.E.S. by Gideon Art Gallery, Backstreet Art District, 2682 Cherokee Way, Palm Springs. Free. (760) 250-1521

Ready for the World, Johnny Gill and Sisters with Voices in concert, 8 p.m., Spotlight 29 Casino, 46-200 Harrison, Coachella. \$35-\$50. (800) 585-3737 or www.spotlight29.com

sunday

Coachella Valley Hiking Club, strenuous 12 miles with 6,400-ft. to 2,200-ft. elevation gain. Entrance fee to Indian Canyon. 8 a.m., Jo Pond to Indian Canyons, Garner Valley. (760) 341-6176

Coachella Valley Hiking Club, moderate 5 miles with 1,000-ft. elevation gain. 8 a.m., Chuckwalla Loop, Rancho Mirage. (760) 770-2800

Holistic Living Expo, 10 a.m., Doral Desert Princess Resort, 67-967 Vista Chino, Cathedral City. \$5-\$10. (831) 239-6835

Sixth annual Desert Garden Tour, presented by Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley. 1-4 p.m., Ironwood Park, 47-800 Chia Drive, Palm Desert. www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org

Desert Cities Jazz Band performing with special guest Amanda King and Andy Langham, 2 p.m., Vicky's of Santa Fe, 45-100 Club Drive, Indian Wells. \$10. (760) 345-9770

Virginia Waring International Piano Competition featuring concerto finals with orchestra, 2 p.m., McCallum Theatre, 73-000 Fred Waring Drive, Palm Desert. \$15-\$35. (760) 340-2787 or www.mccallumtheatre.com

"In The Fields, On The River" concert with Desert California Chorale, 3 p.m., Our Savior's Community Church, 1020 E. Ramon Road, Palm Springs. \$25-\$30. (760) 346-4933 or www.californiadessertchorale.org

monday

Geolocation: Desertscape solo exhibition, with opening reception 5 p.m. Wed.. Regular hours noon Mon.-Thu. Open to the public. Walter N. Marks Center for the Arts, 43-500 Monterey Ave., Palm Desert. Free. (760) 776-7278

Jazz for Jazz Lovers series, 7 p.m. Mon. Marty Steele & Laura Hagen; 7 p.m. Wed. Larry Koonse Quartet; 7 p.m. April 30 Gary Smulyan/Ron Spout Quartet, Pete Carlson's Golf & Tennis, 73-741 Highway 111, Palm Desert. \$10. (760) 568-3263

Community Blood Bank blood drive, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Fresh & Easy, 102 S. Sunrise Way, Palm Springs. (760) 773-4190

Widow or widowers guest speaker series, with featured speaker Caliah Manson on the subject of "New Technology and Computers." 10 a.m., Mizell Senior Center, 480 S. Sunrise Way, Palm Springs. Free. (760) 322-7471

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