



May 19, 2010

## The "R" Word - Realignment

(Note: The following was posted last night on CSAC's Blog - *The County Voice*.)

Since the release of the Governor's May Revise, rumors have been flying around the Capitol about realigning services between the state and local government as a potential solution to part of the budget gap. In his public reaction to the May Revise, President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg stated that "The real answer here is we must restructure and realign this outdated structure that we have here in California and we need to provide the revenue to the entity that is in the best place to provide the services."

The notion of realignment sparks fears and skepticism among many and puts shivers down the spine of most counties. The concept — that locals can do it better than the state — is commendable, and often true *if it's structured and funded correctly*. But we've learned some hard lessons from the 1991 realignment of services: that good policy can go bad if the state begins toying with funding formulas, adds new responsibilities, defers payments, or falls short in fulfilling its part of the commitment for supporting the services it is asking the counties to take over.

This week, the CSAC Officers have sent a letter to the leadership in the Legislature stating the perspective of California's counties on realignment. ([Read the letter here.](#))

Given that one of the proposals in the May Revise is the transfer of \$600 million out of the realignment mental health services account and into the social services account, a move that would eviscerate the 1991 Realignment deal, CSAC has expressed a very real concern of any other type of realignment until that proposal is taken off the table.

The Officers also note that, since counties are an integral part of the service model, it is essential that California counties be involved in the development of any realignment proposal.

While we do not yet know what programs would be candidate for realignment, what revenue source would be attributed to those programs, or how it would be raised, we invite your comments and thoughts on the letter and on a realignment proposal in general.

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