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# County faces huge new cuts

## Property-tax loss could mean 200 layoffs

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Santa Cruz County government is facing budget cuts that could mean layoff of 200 workers, county officials said this morning.

The budget, passed by the state Assembly early today, means a cut of \$2.6 billion in property taxes to county governments and special districts, and an \$11 million cut for Santa Cruz County. The money will be shifted to schools.

"The cuts would be enormous,"

said County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello.

The \$11 million cut would practically double the \$13 million in cuts the county is already facing, said Supervisor Gary Patton. Supervisors are in the middle of budget hearings this week.

A \$24 million cut would mean a 20 percent reduction in services, Patton said.

Gov. Pete Wilson had been talking about cutting only \$1.2 billion from the counties, but over the

weekend cut a deal with legislative leaders to make the \$2.6 billion cut.

The cut is not final, Mauriello emphasized, because the budget must still be approved by the state Senate. The Senate could vote as early as this afternoon.

Wire service reports this morning indicated that an extension of a half-cent sales tax into the 1993-94 fiscal year would make up part of the local property-tax losses. That money, however, would be

earmarked for local public safety programs — which could include police and sheriff patrol services, and fire fighting.

Watsonville City Manager Steve Salomon said this morning he hadn't seen a detailed breakdown of the Assembly-approved budget and couldn't comment on how it would affect Watsonville government.

Aptos/La Selva Fire Chief Chuck Mornard echoed Salomon. Fire  
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districts receive most of their financial support from property taxes and a state Special District Augmentation Fund, which was set up in the wake of the passage of Prop. 13 in 1978.

Mauriello and Patton urged people in the audience to call state senators, including Henry Mello, D-Watsonville, and urge him to oppose the budget. Patton even had the phone numbers of key senators announced.

Mauriello said the state-budget plan hits smaller counties such as Santa Cruz harder than metropolitan counties.

"That means our taxes are going to San Francisco and Los Angeles to take care of their problems" said Supervisor Jan Beautz.

Mauriello said there are still unanswered questions about the budget, including funding for courts, health and welfare, and public safety.

Without any cuts from the state, the county was looking at reductions in some programs, a 7.5 percent cut in hours and pay for most workers, and 31 layoffs from a staff of 2,175.

Representatives of 26 community programs appeared before supervisors this morning to seek funding. Mauriello said she is recommending continuing the same funding as last year, but that doesn't consider the new cuts from the state.

Staff reporter Bob Smith also contributed to this report.