

Mello introduces bill to boost library budget

PP SEP 10 1993 p.2

A bill that could boost the cash-strapped Santa Cruz City-County Library system at the expense of certain water, sewer and port districts has been proposed by State Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville.

The legislation, which would apply only to Santa Cruz County, would allow county supervisors to take money from "enterprise" districts — those that charge significant fees for service — and allocate it to the library system.

The library system is facing drastic budget cuts that could force closure of all nine branches, leaving only the main library in Santa Cruz open. The Watsonville city library is a separate system and would not be closed.

Librarian Anne Turner said the library is looking at a cut of as much as \$1.5 million from its \$4.3 million budget. Even without more cuts, the library has greatly reduced the hours it is open.

Mello's bill would allow supervi-

sors to take property tax money from the enterprise districts. Those districts would then have to cut service or raise fees.

The Santa Cruz Port District stands to lose as much as 10 percent of its \$3.5 million budget. Other districts that could be affected are the Scotts Valley, San Lorenzo Valley, Central and Lompico water districts, and sanitation districts for Sand Dollar Beach, Place De Mer, Davenport, Boulder Creek and Salsipuedes.

County Auditor Gary Knutson said the idea of taking money from the enterprise districts "is not necessarily fair" because it doesn't distribute the tax burden evenly.

"Nobody disputes the importance of library services," Knutson said.

"None of this is fair," said Turner, who added that it wasn't fair that enterprise zones weren't hit with the same budget cuts other special districts were last year.