



Commission Meets to Discuss Draft Report on Governor's Reorganization Plan This Friday

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The Little Hoover Commission will meet to discuss its draft report on the Governor's Reorganization Plan 2 (GRP) this Friday, May 11, 2012. This will be the commission's only meeting to discuss its report before submitting it to the governor and Legislature.

The GRP is the governor's sweeping plan to reorganize state agencies, which he describes as a "labyrinth of disjointed boards, commissions, agencies and departments." The plan is likely to touch every industry in California in some manner.

Submitted to the commission in late March, the GRP reduces the number of state agencies from 12 to 10 by eliminating five agencies and merging their responsibilities into three new agencies, Government Operations, Transportation and Business, and Consumer Services. As part of the proposal, the Technology Agency would become a department in the new Government Operations Agency, and the California Emergency Management Agency would become an office reporting to the governor.

It calls for eliminating or transferring activities of several boards and commissions to other locations within the executive branch, and combining the activities of several departments into new or existing departments. Perhaps no part of the GRP has become more controversial than the proposal to transfer the Delta Stewardship Council into the Natural Resources Agency. The council was created as an independent body as part of the 2009 comprehensive water package enacted by the Legislature. It is charged with developing a Delta Plan to guide state and local actions in the Delta to further the co-equal goals of improved water supply reliability and ecosystem health.

According to the GRP the transfer improves "communication and coordination regarding the state's water policies, and ... consolidates administrative functions." Critics view the transfer, however as a punitive measure, stripping the council of its role as impartial evaluator. Chair Phil Isenberg and State Senator Joe

Simitian, author of the 2009 legislation creating the council, attended the Commission's April hearings to testify in opposition to the proposal.

The GRP eliminates the Colorado River Basin Water Board, realigning its jurisdictional boundaries with two neighboring regions, and eliminates the Colorado River Board, transferring its responsibilities to the Natural Resources Agency. Also eliminated under the GRP is the Department of Boating and Waterways, with its functions transferred to the Department of Parks and Recreation, and various entities within the Department of Fish and Game, including the Salton Sea Restoration Council, the California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead Trout, the Commercial Salmon Review Board, the State Interagency Oil Spill Committee, the State Interagency Oil Spill Review Subcommittee and the Abalone Advisory Committee.

By sending the GRP through the commission process, the governor not only sets a firm time limit for consideration of the proposal, but also limits the legislature's ability to make changes. A reorganization plan may be delivered to the Legislature at any time during a regular session. The Legislature has 60 calendar days thereafter to consider the plan. The plan becomes effective on the 61st day unless either the Senate or the Assembly adopts by majority vote a resolution rejecting the plan. Actual statutory language to enact the reorganization is processed in the following year, but the reorganization is effective even without the statutes being on the books.

Although the commission has until the end of May to submit its report, the Legislature's 60-day clock was triggered upon receipt of the GRP earlier this month. If the legislature does not adopt a resolution to reject the GRP by July 3, it becomes effective the following day. Under this process the Legislature has no authority to amend the plan.