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INTERIM RECESS. This is the time of year when legislators are back in their districts, many gearing up for the 2012 election year. Therefore, legislation is essentially “on hold” until the Legislature returns to work on January 4, 2012. The Governor, however, has been busy trying to come to terms with the anticipated shortfall in revenue that is coming whereby the trigger to cut further into education and social programs will occur early next year. The Governor seems to be moving toward a ballot initiative to raise income taxes on the wealthy and increase the sales tax.

The Governor also has been busy putting together his recently released 12-point pension reform plan that he promised during his campaign. In brief, it would force most current public employees — state and local, including teachers — to pay more toward their pensions. It would trim retirement benefits for future employees. They would receive a pension-401(k)-type mix and their retirement ages would be raised from 63 to 67. Current workers generally can quit and begin drawing partial pensions at 50, with some noted exceptions. Highway patrol officers and prison guards are entitled to full-boat pensions at 50. "It's time to fix our pension systems so that they are fair and sustainable," the Governor said. "This is a program to protect the taxpayers as well as those who work to serve the taxpayers." The Dems and their labor union supporters will likely try to kill most of this plan, while the Reps and the Chamber of Commerce think it is great. The key will be to see whether the Governor uses his brawn to shove it through the Legislature but many believe that he won't do that.

2012 ELECTION CAMPAIGNS. This upcoming election will be noteworthy - not just because the once every ten years redistricting has occurred whereby all but 20 of the 173 legislative and congressional seats are up in the newly drawn districts by a Citizens Commission for the first time — but because of the Open Primary that will be in effect for the first time where the top two vote getters in the June primary will advance to November regardless of party affiliation. There are 60 incumbents who now find themselves outside of their current district or put together with another incumbent. And if this isn't enough drama, term limits will eject 22 Assembly members and 6 Senate members. Further complicating this election drama is that the State Republican Party, concerned that they very well will lose the Senate to 2/3 Dems, have launched a referendum of the redistricting plan for the state Senate. IF this qualifies (they need 505,000 valid signatures by November 13th so we'll know fairly soon whether it does or not) then the new Senate districts will be shelved until 2014 and new lines will be drawn by the State Supreme Court for the 2012 Senate elections. Whew. But we'll have to wait until the spring of 2012 before we know who's running where and against whom. Stay tuned!

SOME TRIVIA BY NUMBERS ON LEGISLATION OVER THE YEARS:

870	Number of bills that were sent to Governor Brown this year
1,426	Average number of bills sent to Governor Brown 1975-83
14.4	Percentage of bills vetoed by Governor Brown this year
4.6	Average percentage vetoed by Governor Brown from 1975-83
26.4	Average percentage vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger in seven years