

# California Counties 101

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California State Association of Counties

# California State Association of Counties (CSAC)

- A nonprofit membership association, in which all 58 counties are members.
- Advocates on behalf of counties at local, state, and federal levels.
- Governed by a Board of Directors- one elected county supervisor from each county is represented.
- Five main policy issue areas: Administration of Justice; Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources; Government Finance and Administration; Health and Human Services; Housing, Land Use and Transportation

# CSAC Officers





# California's ~~27 Counties~~ 58 Counties



# California counties are...

- Political subdivisions of the state (California Constitution, Article XI, Section 1)
- Counties operate a number of programs and services on behalf of the state and federal governments, as well as on behalf of county residents.
- It's complicated...

# California counties...

- Provide state services throughout the county, including:
  - CalWORKs
  - Adult Protective Services
  - Child Protective Services
  - Substance Use Disorder Services
  - CalFRESH
  - Foster Care
  - In-Home Supportive Services
  - Medical Care Services
  - Behavioral Health Services
  - Public Health
  - Jails

# California counties...

- Provide municipal services in the unincorporated area (about 17% of Californians live in unincorporated areas), such as:
  - Building inspection/code enforcement
  - Building permits/plan checking
  - Economic development
  - Emergency services
  - Fire protection
  - Housing
  - Library services
  - Parks and recreation
  - Pest control
  - Planning and zoning
  - Public safety (Sheriff)
  - Sewers
  - Street lighting/road maintenance
  - Streets/roads/ highways/storm drains
  - Water delivery
  - Weed abatement
  - Animal Control



# California counties...

- Provide countywide services as prescribed by law, like:

- Adult Detention (jails)
- Ag Commissioner
- Assessor
- Auditor-Controller
- Communicable Disease Control
- Cooperative Extension
- Coroner/Medical Examiner
- District Attorney
- Elections
- Environmental Health
- Forensic Labs
- Veterans Services
- Immunizations
- Indigent Burials
- Juvenile Detention
- Juvenile Justice Programs
- Landfill
- Law Library
- Probation (Juvenile and Adult)
- Public Administrator
- Public Guardian-Conservator
- Recorder/Vital Statistics
- Regional Parks
- Treasurer/Tax Collector
- Weights and Measures

# County Organization and Structure

- Counties are governed by statutory and constitutional requirements, but there are two kinds of counties:

General Law Counties - 43

Charter Counties - 15

- General Law Counties follow the general letter of the law.
- Charter Counties have more flexibility. For example, they can change:
  - Number of members of boards of supervisors (Los Angeles).
  - Compensation and terms of office of supervisors.
  - The power of the county executive and the relationship between the county executive and the board of supervisors.
- A charter does not give county officials extra authority over local regulations, revenue raising abilities and/or budgetary decisions.

# Counties with Charters



Alameda

Butte

El Dorado

Fresno

Los Angeles

Orange

Placer

Sacramento

San Bernardino

San Diego

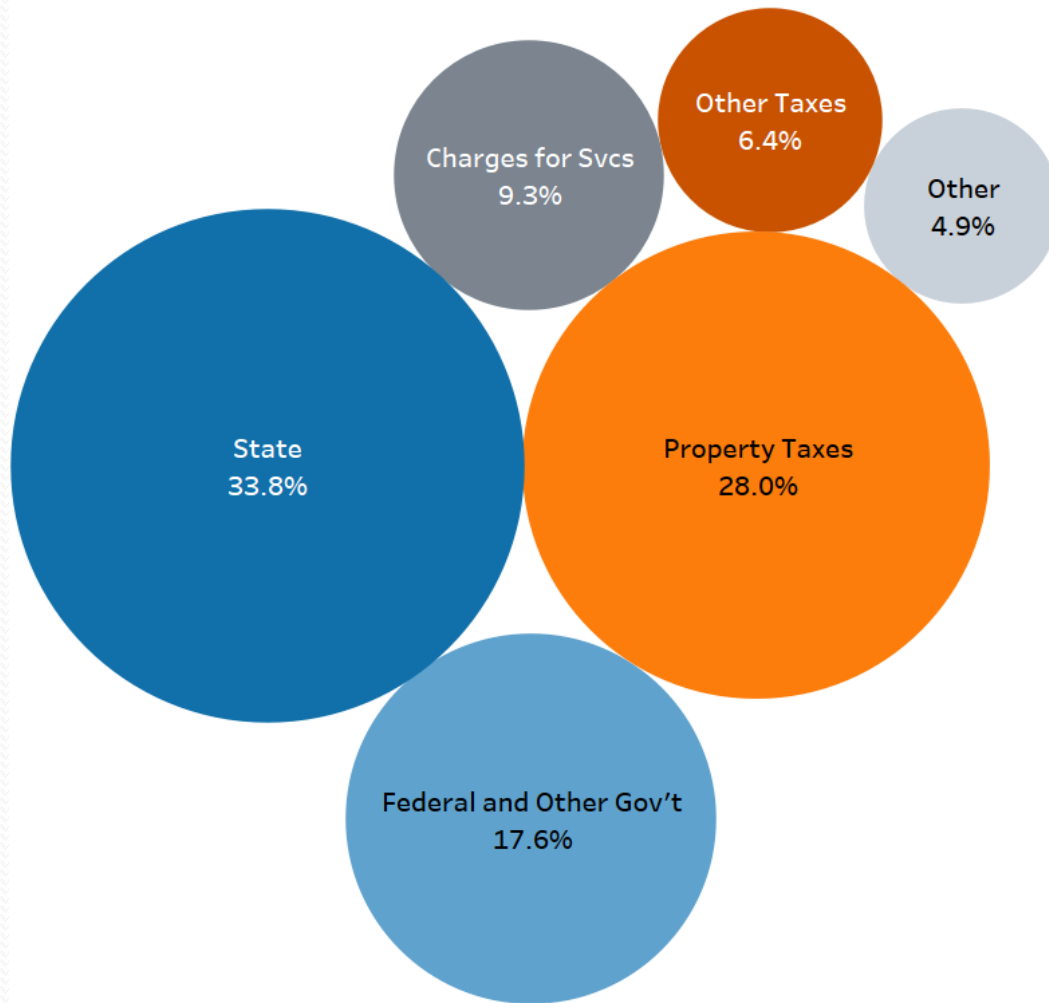
San Francisco

San Mateo

Santa Clara

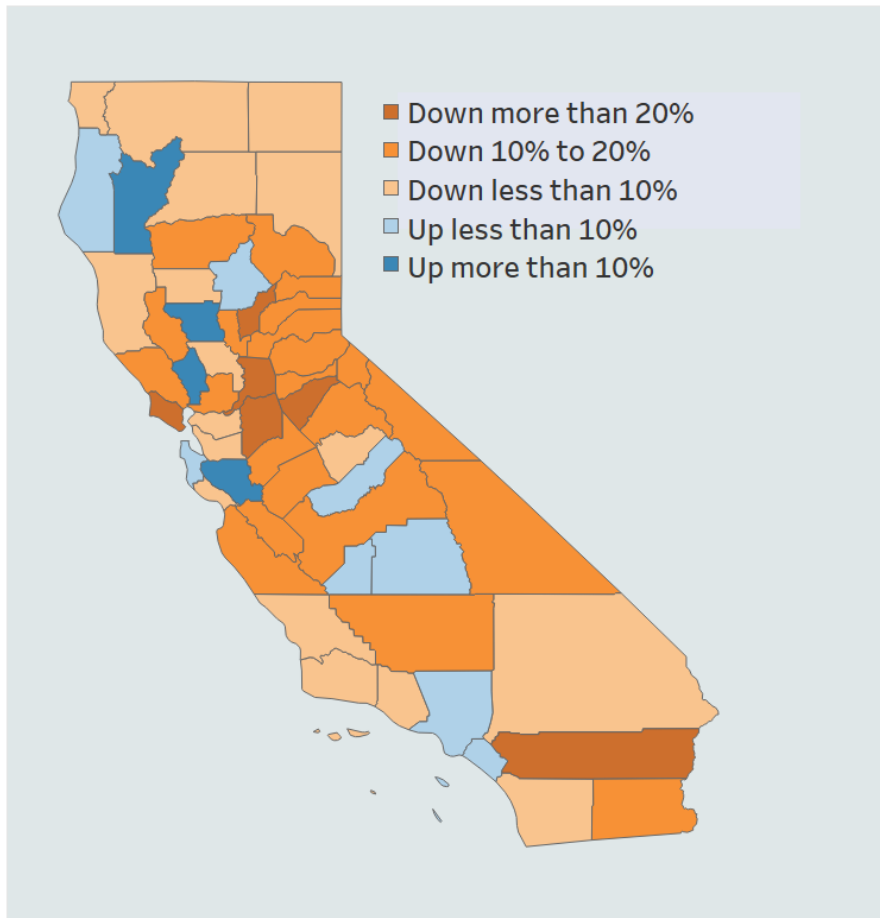
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# County Finances - Revenue



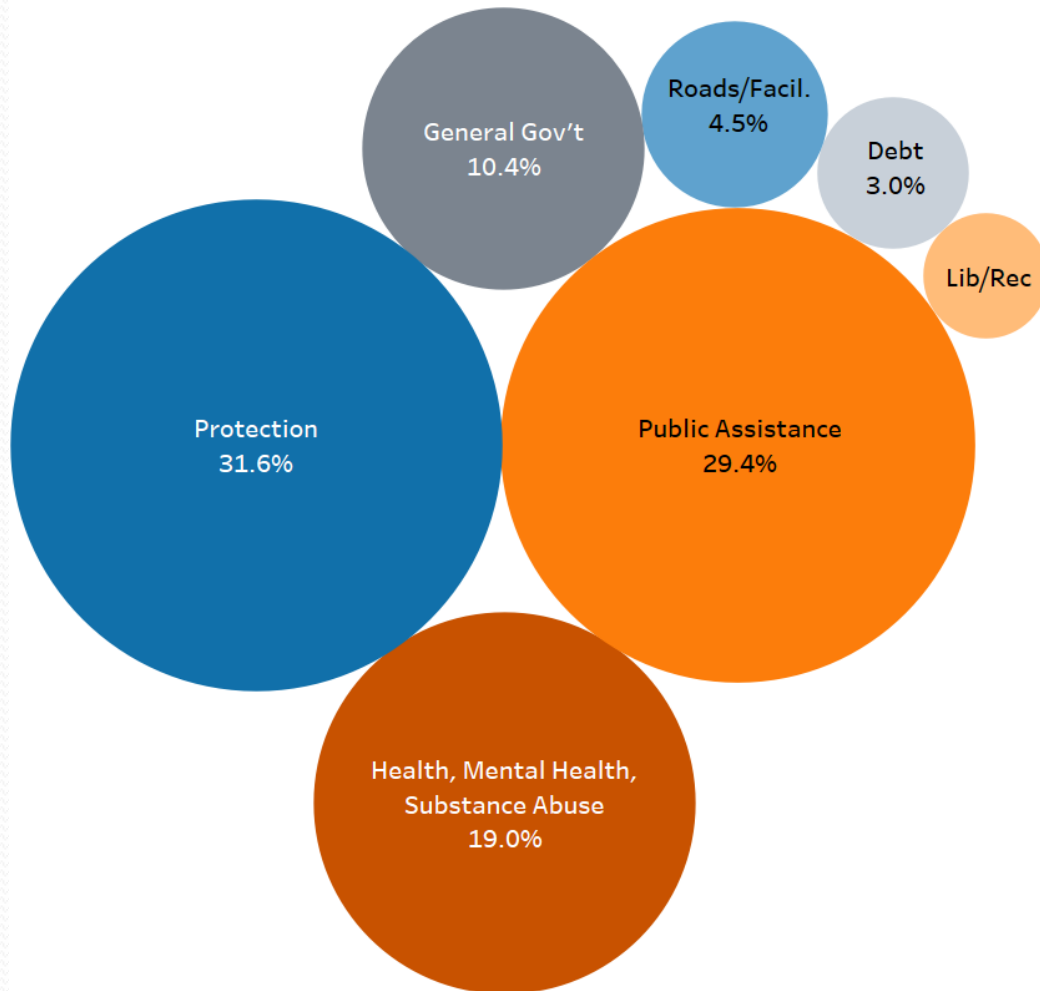
- The bulk of county revenues comes from the state and federal governments to operate federal and state-mandated services.
- Property taxes and sales taxes account for the bulk of county discretionary revenues.

# County Finances – A Slow Decade



- Nearly a decade after the Great Recession, per capita tax revenues in most counties had still not recovered, in real dollars.
- Property taxes and sales taxes both grow significantly more slowly than GDP.

# County Finances - Spending



- The spending on public assistance, health and behavioral health reflects counties' responsibility for state and federal entitlement programs.

# Mandates & Reimbursements

- The state is constitutionally required through Proposition 4 (1979) and Proposition 1A (2004) to pay for new or higher levels of service it mandates counties and other local agencies provide.
- Sometimes, the state suspends mandates.
- Mandates are particularly burdensome for counties because of the severe restrictions on raising county revenues to pay for new requirements.
- All state mandates should be funded prior to delivery of the new or higher level of service.
- The state should not require counties to provide a service for which it is unwilling to timely pay.

# Realignment (1991)

- In 1991, the Legislature and Governor approved a “realignment” of 19 state/county health, mental health and social services programs, essentially shifting a greater share of costs to counties with funding generated by new revenue sources.
- Counties also were granted flexibility in managing some of the realigned programs, particularly in the mental health area.



# 1991 Realigned Programs

- **Health Services**

- County Health Services
- Medically Indigent Services Program
- County Medical Services Program
- Local Health Services

- **Mental Health Services**

- Community-based Mental Health
- Institutes for Mental Disease
- State Hospitals

- **Social Services**

- CalWORKs Aid Payments
- Welfare Administration
- Foster Care
- Child Welfare Services
- Adoptions Assistance
- GAIN
- In-Home Supportive Services
- County Services Block Grant
- County Juvenile Justice Subventions
- County Stabilization Subventions
- California Children's Services

# 1991 Realignment Funding

- ½ cent state sales tax increase
- A “slowing down” of the Vehicle License Fee (VLF) depreciation schedule; currently, 74.9% of the 0.65 VLF rate.
- Revenues are continuously appropriated and allocated to counties on a monthly basis.
- County-by-county formulas are very complicated and, in many instances, based on decades-old caseload and spending data for each jurisdiction.

# 2011 Realignment

- The 2011-12 state budget transferred about \$6 billion in new program responsibilities to counties.
- 2011 realignment reflects perhaps the most significant policy changes in the public safety area in our lifetimes.
- Counties are now responsible for a new offender population and for post-release community supervision (PRCS) for certain offenders.
- Counties now are responsible for 100% share of cost for a variety of human services programs.

# 2011 Realigned Programs

- Public Safety
  - Trial Court Security
  - Local Law Enforcement Subventions
  - District Attorney and Public Defender (AB 109)
  - Local Community Corrections (AB 109)
  - Juvenile Justice
- Health and Human Services
  - Community Mental Health
  - EPSDT
  - Mental Health Managed Care
  - Substance Use Disorder Services
  - Adult Protective Services
  - Foster Care and Child Welfare Services

# 2011 Realignment Funding

- 1.0625% of existing state sales tax rate
- 25.1% of existing Vehicle License Fees (VLF), essentially remainder after 1991 realignment
- Funds are deposited into a state special fund and continuously appropriated to counties on a monthly basis.
- County-by-county formulas vary depending on program.
- Permanent fiscal structure approved in 2012.

# Other Major Issues

- COVID-19
  - Vaccinations and testing
  - Economic supports
  - Mental health and domestic violence crises
  - Emergency response
- Disaster Recovery
  - More frequent
  - Different: more rain & snow damage
  - Causes homelessness

# Other Major Issues

- Homelessness and Affordable Housing
  - Which level of government does what?
  - Resources should match responsibilities
- Behavioral Health Services
  - Seeking additional funding for services and new mandates.
  - Implementation of state's CalAIM Medi-Cal proposal
  - Cross-sector collaboration: schools, justice system, etc.
- Juvenile Justice Realignment
  - Like other realignments, adequate funding and flexibility are essential

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