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Religious leaders endorse California tax increase

Monica Clark | May. 1, 2012

California Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed initiative to raise income taxes on residents who make more than $250,000 a year got a boost last week with the endorsement of religious leaders who met with him in the basement of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in the state capital of Sacramento.

About 200 leaders of PICO California, a network of faith-based community organizations, told Brown they believe those who are blessed with riches should share them with the less fortunate. They said they will work to register voters within their congregations and will urge their members to support Brown's proposal, which is expected to qualify for the ballot in the next couple of weeks.

The proposal would raise income taxes by 1 percent to 3 percent over seven years on people with an annual income of more than $250,000. It would also raise the sales tax from 7.25 percent to 7.5 percent for four years, starting in January. Both proposed taxes are part of the governor's effort to deal with the state's budget crisis. Without it, Brown has said, there will be more budget cuts to public education and other services.

According to The Associated Press, Brown told the clergy group gathered from throughout the state, that the income tax proposal "represents our best spirits. Those who have made $1 million or $500,000 or $250,000, they've been blessed and they must join with us in blessing those that have not been so fortunate."

He went on to say that every Californian, "no matter how rich or how poor," would pay the increased sales tax.

"We're all in it together," he said.

The California Catholic Conference, the church's public policy arm, has not yet taken a position on the tax initiative. CCC usually does not comment until an initiative has qualified for the ballot.

The religious leaders, both Christian and Jewish, were in Sacramento to encourage lawmakers to create policies that reflect the values of social justice.

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