

# Assembly California Legislature



June 21, 2016

**CHAD MAYES**  
ASSEMBLY REPUBLICAN LEADER  
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, FORTY-SECOND DISTRICT

Honorable Anthony Rendon  
Speaker of the Assembly  
State Capitol Room 219  
Sacramento, CA 95184

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We write to express our disappointment with the process and lack of transparency that marked the passage of the 2016-17 state budget. Specifically, none of the final bills that implemented the budget ("trailer bills") were granted a public hearing by the Assembly Budget Committee. It is our responsibility to ensure that the people of California have the opportunity to make their voices heard on all state policy issues, and few issues are more important than our state budget.

Legislative Democrats often point to the various budget subcommittee hearings and the budget conference committee as opportunities for public input. However, the fact is that the budget conference committee specifically prohibits public testimony, and the budget subcommittees primarily adopt "placeholder" language that is only filled in at the very last minute before the bills are voted on by the house. There is no credibility to the claim that "work-in-progress" discussions in sub committees or conference committee constitute a public review and vetting of the final policy bill. When committees direct staff to draft language reflecting conceptual agreements, this language must be brought back to the committee for public review and a final vote. Integrity, transparency and good governance dictate that the committees adopt clear, definitive language that has been scrutinized by the public.

In the Assembly, this year's budget trailer bills failed this basic test of legislative transparency. In the end, the Senate Budget Committee heard the trailer bills in their final form while the Assembly remained attached to a system designed to pass the budget without public input. This is unacceptable to us, and we hope it is equally unacceptable to you.

A stark example of this lack of transparency was evident just this week with the passage of SB 839 (Resources Trailer Bill) and SB 840 (Energy Trailer Bill), which were passed off the Assembly Floor with language that had only been publicly available for one day. Unfortunately, there are many other examples as well. Californians should not fear what may be slipped into a budget trailer bill because of the failure to hold hearings to review the bills.

This year's state budget spends a record \$122.5 billion General Fund and nearly \$270 billion overall. It is imperative that the process be open and transparent, and this starts with ensuring that the public is able to review and comment on clear, definitive final language. We can do better and the public deserves it.

Our Caucuses have worked well together on several issues this session; however on the issue of transparency our differences remain. As we move forward this year and in the future, we hope you will guarantee that the Assembly holds public hearings on all final budget trailer bills and also ensure all other legislative measures receive the proper level of transparency and public participation.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Chad Mayes in blue ink.

CHAD MAYES  
Assembly Republican Leader

Handwritten signature of Jay Obernolte in blue ink.

JAY OBERNOLTE  
Assembly Republican Budget Vice-Chair