

# California LABOR Federation

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**For Immediate Release**  
**February 5, 2009**

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## **Labor, Environmental Groups Press AG to Investigate Republicans for Vote Trading in Budget Process**

*In Letter to Attorney General Brown, Coalition Asserts Republican Actions Violate Law*

**(Sacramento, February 5)** – In a letter sent to Attorney General Jerry Brown yesterday afternoon, a coalition of labor and environmental groups asked for an immediate investigation of Republicans for vote trading as part of the budget negotiations, a criminal offense punishable by up to four years imprisonment under Section 86 of the California Penal Code.

The charge by leaders of the California Labor Federation, State Building and Construction Trades Council, Sierra Club California and the Planning and Conservation League stems from reports that Republican legislative leadership are withholding their votes on a state budget as they attempt to extract votes on policy matters unrelated to the budget.

“Republicans are holding the state budget hostage in a shameful attempt to gut vital workplace and environmental standards that have absolutely nothing to do with the budget,” said California Labor Federation Executive Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski. “These actions aren’t just unconscionable, they may be criminal.”

The letter offers examples of actions that may be in violation of the penal code.

“Specifically, (Republican leaders) have demanded that legislators vote for proposals to weaken labor and environmental standards as a condition for any ‘aye’ vote from Republican caucus members on the overall budget,” the letter states.

This conduct appears to violate Penal Code Section 86, which prohibits any legislator from offering to give his or her vote in exchange for another legislator’s vote on the same or a different matter.

“The minority party's fiscal blackmail tactics not only threaten the health of Californians’ lungs, they may violate the law that bans legislative vote-trading,” said Bill Magavern, Director of Sierra Club California.

As part of the budget negotiations, Republican leadership has sought to eliminate California regulations on overtime pay and mandatory meal breaks for workers as well as dilute environmental standards under the guise of “economic stimulus.” These measures would do nothing to help the economy or close the budget gap.

“It’s outrageous that the Republicans would bring the entire budget process to a screeching halt just to take away workers’ rights,” said Bob Balgenorth, president of the State Building and Construction Trades Council.

The letter was signed by Pulaski, Balgenorth, Magavern and Tina Andolina, Legislative Director, Planning and Conservation League.

“Vote trading is illegal under any circumstance. Vote trading during this deep fiscal crisis is unconscionable. Political gamesmanship threatens the livelihood of millions of California taxpayers, workers, and vendors,” the letter says. “We write to urge you to immediately begin an investigation as to the illegal vote trading that the Republican leadership has engaged in. Because of the pressing nature of the budget negotiations, we ask that you expedite such investigation.”

United States Attorney General Eric Holder also was sent a copy of the letter.

For a copy of the letter, please contact Steve Smith at [ssmith@calaborfed.org](mailto:ssmith@calaborfed.org) or 510-326-4644.

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