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HEADLINE: **No trespassing, state told;**

MANDATE: Prop. 1A, which voters overwhelmingly passed, limits Sacramento's reach into local pockets.

BYLINE: DOUG HABERMAN; THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

BODY:

Government officials throughout the Inland Empire are rejoicing at the passage of Prop. 1A and expressing a tempered optimism about the security it will bring to their budgets.

For years the state Legislature has raided municipal government coffers to plug budget shortfalls. Officials calculate they've lost more than \$ 40 billion this way since the early 1990s.

Prop. 1A, which won by the highest margin of the 16 initiatives on the California ballot - 83.6 percent to 16.4 percent - is a solid step in preventing future grabs, officials and experts said.

"The idea that the state could steal taxes from us was just death to us every year," Fontana City Councilwoman Janice Rutherford said.

The proposition amends the state constitution to make it much more difficult for the state to siphon property and sales-tax dollars away from cities, counties and special districts.

The revenues pay for police and fire protection, park maintenance and recreation programs, street improvements and tree trimming and a variety of other services and programs.

"It is a major, historic change in the decision rules of the state. We've now separated state funding and local funding," Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge said. He is the immediate past president of the League of California Cities, which was one of the initiative's driving forces.

Voters have never before so resoundingly told state leaders to keep their hands off local revenues, Steve Frates, senior

fellow at the Rose Institute, said. Based at Claremont McKenna College, the think tank focuses on state and local government.

"It's a politically significant tectonic shift," he said.

Local elected officials said that before Prop. 1A they often faced the unpalatable prospect of state takeaways that forced them to choose between tax increases or service cuts and layoffs. The situation should be different now, Roy Wilson, chairman of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, said.

"I'm cautiously optimistic this will establish a new era for local government in California," he said

Jim O'Grady, assistant city manager for Temecula, said the threat of state raids has made it hard for cities to write budgets, but that Prop. 1A ought to make it easier.

"Hopefully, it will let us and all cities do a better job of long-range planning," he said.

Dan Rodriguez, general manager of the Jurupa Area Recreation and Park District, said each year the district has experienced tremendous uncertainty about how secure its tax revenues were from state depredation.

"I think at least for the next few years of our budget planning process, we can feel comfortable those tax revenues will remain intact," he said. The district serves more than 85,000 residents, running dozens of recreation programs and maintaining nine parks in northwestern Riverside County.

Assemblyman Bob Dutton, R-Rancho Cucamonga, was one of several Inland lawmakers who worked hard to craft the compromise that led to Prop. 1A's placement on the ballot. As a former Rancho Cucamonga City Council member, he saw the state taking money from cities year after year, he said.

The measure "will definitely stop the Legislature from robbing the piggy bank," Dutton said.

In the deal worked out with Gov. Schwarzenegger and the Legislature, local government officials agreed to give up \$ 1.3 billion in revenues this fiscal year and \$ 1.3 billion next year to help the state trim its multibillion-dollar deficit.

Rutherford and Frates said history shows some in the Legislature might seek loopholes in the initiative that would allow the state to continue dipping into local revenues.

The overwhelming victory of the proposition, Frates said, should serve to warn legislators that if they try to find ways around Prop. 1A, "they may face a really hostile public."

Citing the almost 84 percent vote for the measure, Riverside County Supervisor John Tavaglione said: "I think the message has been sent."

And if the Legislature still doesn't get the message, it should be easier for local governments to fight back, Palm Desert City Manager Carlos Ortega said.

"This is in the constitution now," he said.

NOTES:

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