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January 11, 2012

Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Unleashing California Know-How to Transform California's Government

Dear Governor Brown:

Congratulations on completing a successful first year in office. As we head into a new year, I'd like to encourage you to not only focus on finally solving California's budgetary woes, but to begin laying the ground work for a transformative government reform campaign. California is the epicenter for world innovation – especially in social media with Facebook, Google, Twitter, Yelp, Yahoo! and more – and we could harness that power that has been used to bring down despots and spread democracy across the Middle East to forge a new, workable governance structure for California.

Working together we've managed to significantly slash the State's budget deficit, and clearly, job-one for 2012 is finally solving California's on-going budgetary dilemma. While it's absolutely critical that we resolve this immediate crisis, we also must be thinking in a more long-term manner to help insure the ongoing success of this State. As bad as our circumstances are at the moment, trading water shouldn't be our only priority.

Unfortunately, it has become clear that the State Legislature cannot muster the 2/3's vote necessary to place substantive governmental reforms before the voters. As it stands, the only folks apparently capable of doing serious long-term thinking are billionaire philanthropists and their well-heeled associates. While I have great respect for the motivations of those attempting to reform California's obviously flawed governance structure, I don't think back-room deal making by an exclusive club of elites can produce successful reforms for such a diverse and complicated state.

While the Think Long Committee's recommendations were generally off the mark, the underlying need for change isn't. California cannot afford to limp along indefinitely with our outdated and hobbled governance system. Fixing that system, however, requires an open process involving all segments of California's diverse society.

For these reasons, I encourage you in your *State of the State* speech to not only lay out your plans to finally solve California's historic budget crisis but to think even bigger by outlining a plan to *truly* transform California. For too long Hiram Johnson's revolutionary vision for empowering the people has been hijacked by deep pocketed special interests. Today, those interest groups concoct constitutional amendments in private laboratories run by political consultants and tiny focus groups resulting in a system of government that's nearly at war with itself.

Fortunately, we're blessed with two unique and powerful resources for restoring Hiram Johnson's vision and improving our government's responsiveness. First, we have at our universities some of the world's greatest minds, including the single largest concentration of Nobel Laureates in the world. Second, California is the birthplace of the information revolution and the worldwide leader in technology innovation. If engaged, those two powerful resources have the capacity to transform this State.

To do that I recommend you lay out an 18-month work-plan starting with the creation of the *Hiram Johnson Government Innovation Commission* to improve government responsiveness. The Commission would be composed of a diverse group of governmental experts, public representatives, business and labor representatives, Democratic and Republican State Legislators and local government leaders. I'm confident the Legislature will contribute to cover the costs of the Commission and lend staff to help administer the Commission's work.

The Commission, created through Executive Order, should be given one year to consult with the Legislative Analyst's Office, experts at the University of California and California State University campuses and other experts throughout California. In conjunction with that research the Commission should host at least 20 public hearings around the state, and through a partnership with social media stage several on-line town-halls. Based on all that input, the Commission would then publicly vote on what it considers the 10 most critical changes to improve the state's governance system.

Following the conclusion of the Commission's work, the Legislature should then be given three months to review those proposals and hold hearings on them. At the close of those three months, the Commission would be given an additional sixty days to solicit additional public input based on the Legislature's hearings and make whatever final revisions it deems necessary.

Governor Brown--*Transforming California*

January 11, 2012

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As the Commission conducts its work, I suggest a concurrent effort to forge a partnership with California's social media industry to stage a statewide "You Decide" on-line election for fixing California. This on-line election would empower the people to decide, which of the Commission's ten proposals, are the three-to-five most critical to putting California back on track. The on-line election should take place over the course of one month and educate the voters on the state's challenges and provide a clear explanation of the various responses proposed to meet those challenges. Once the people have spoken, let's qualify the three-to-five proposals they've identified for the November, 2014 ballot either through the Legislature or through a signature gathering process. From start to finish, this would be the first of its kind statewide constitutional convention in which all citizens can participate.

We have the resources available to us to restore California's reputation as the Golden State. Our citizens have helped transform the world, now we need their help to transform our state. But to accomplish that we must start now.

Don't take your eye off the prize of finally fixing this budget mess, but let's start the ball rolling now on transformational governmental reform. I know these are historic and ingrained challenges. Overcoming them will be extremely difficult requiring discipline and a sustained focus. I am certain, however, that a broad cross-section of Californians are anxious to help you restore California. Empowering our citizenry using California-grown technology, will also help send a message to our nation and the world that we are ready to lead once again.

Sincerely,



KEVIN DE LEÓN
Twenty-Second Senate District