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Sacramento Bee

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Involuntary furlough proposal draws fire from Yolo workers

Pamela Martineau Bee Staff Writer

More than 100 **county** employees attended a **YoloCounty** Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday to protest a proposal to involuntarily furlough **county** workers for nearly two weeks as a cost-saving measure.

Many of the **county** workers said that if extreme cost-cutting measures were needed to balance the **county'sbudget**, they would rather see a small number of employees laid off than everyone docked pay.

"There is room for some layoffs. People who get laid off get recourse," said Bob Da Raza, a business representative for the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 39. "People who get furloughs have no recourse. They have to eat it."

County officials said the proposed furloughs would save the **county** about \$2.9 million. The loss of 76 hours of work pay per employee would amount to a 3.96 percent cut of an employees' annual salary.

"That 3.96 percent is what people buy the groceries with. It's what they pay the rent with," said Aaron Bohrer, an employee with the **YoloCounty** Department of Probation.

Under the proposal, the **county** would dock employees' pay by 3.96 percent throughout the fiscal year. The proposed furloughs would be taken over the Christmas holiday and essentially shut most **county** services during that time.

"I think we could all pull in our belts and do a furlough," said **YoloCounty** Supervisor Helen Thomson. "Furloughs during the Christmas season ... really don't impact everyone a great deal because there are a lot of offices not working around that time."

Employees who work in 24-hour operations such as the Sheriff's Department, Juvenile Hall or Child Protective Services would work as normal through the furlough period but take the unpaid days off in shorter periods scattered throughout the year.

The cost-saving measure is proposed as the **county** attempts to balance its **budget** without knowing the size of the **budget** cuts that will be sent down from the state. **YoloCounty** has about \$14 million in reserves in an overall **budget** of about \$245 million. Early projections indicate that the **county** would use at least \$3 million of those reserves to balance the **budget**.

Other **counties** have adopted similar furlough programs, including Butte, Tehama, Sonoma and Monterey, **Yolo** officials said. Other **counties** also have announced layoffs.

Supervisors postponed a decision on the proposed furloughs until the board's July 20 meeting to allow **county** employees time to propose other cost-saving measures and to research how much would be saved through a voluntary furlough program.

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