



Elected officials across Arizona have had to balance significant revenue shortfalls with increasing demands for services in the last decade. State legislators are now celebrating a balanced budget, and you deserve to – you’ve made difficult decisions and budget cuts to bring Arizona’s forecast back into the black. But now state leaders need to continue to do the responsible thing: they need to balance their budget in a transparent way by removing the budget shifts they made during the state’s most difficult times. It is time to take responsibility for Sexually Violent Persons treatment, a program that has been increasingly forced into county coffers.

Maricopa County leaders cannot yet celebrate the financial good times the state is experiencing. We do not have a general purpose sales tax, and the formula of property values means our property tax revenues are still bringing in less than forecasted each year. Federal budget cuts, while necessary, are putting additional strains on our public safety and criminal justice mandated services.

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors is taking our responsibility seriously: we’re continuing to cut any excess spending we can, and we’re balancing our budget by cutting programs rather than forcing other entities to pay for them. We ask you to do the same.

Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Kunasek".

Andrew Kunasek
Chairman, Maricopa County Board of Supervisors

What is the SVP Program, and Why Are Counties Paying For It?

“Sexually violent persons” are convicted offenders who have served their time at the Arizona Department of Corrections but are not yet ready to re-enter society. The state’s SVP program, housed at the Arizona State Hospital, provides treatment in a criminal justice environment.

The SVP program is entirely operated by the state, without county consultation or fiscal oversight. But since 2010, the state has shifted responsibility for funding of its program to county budgets. The state shifted 25% of program costs to counties in 2010 and increased the burden to 50% of the program in 2011. **The shift has cost Maricopa County taxpayers \$9.6 million, and the costs rise every day.**

Why Shouldn’t Counties Pay For It?

This is not a program the counties can do better than the state. Since 2002, Maricopa County has taken over both adult and juvenile probation programs from the state and created a Restoration to Competency program to relieve the state’s responsibility over these important criminal justice programs. Maricopa County has paid almost \$140 million to operate these programs, but it was a win for taxpayers: the county operated the programs more efficiently while the state saved millions of dollars. The SVP program, on the other hand, does not fit in the role of county government. **It cannot be absorbed or operated by counties and therefore we cannot responsibly assist with its operation.**

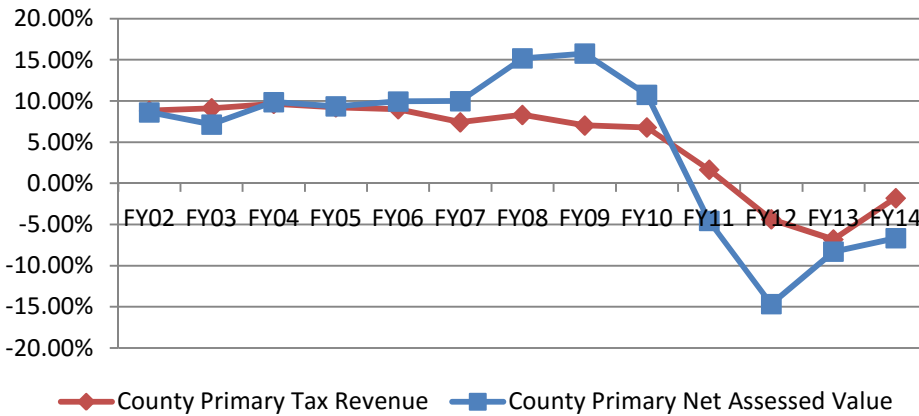
State shifts remove transparency in the budget process. Each year the SVP shift is continued as a “baseline” without honest dialogue about the issue. Continuing to make a wrong decision never makes it the right thing to do, and **shifting the costs removes incentives to do the program better and more efficiently.**

How Can We Fix It?

The solution is simple: the state legislature should not include the shift of SVP costs to counties in FY14. We are not asking for a repayment of the \$9.6 million we have contributed to the program (or the additional \$5.4 million paid to the program by Arizona’s other counties). We only ask that the shift be removed from state budget negotiations so both state and county leaders can make responsible, transparent budget decisions.

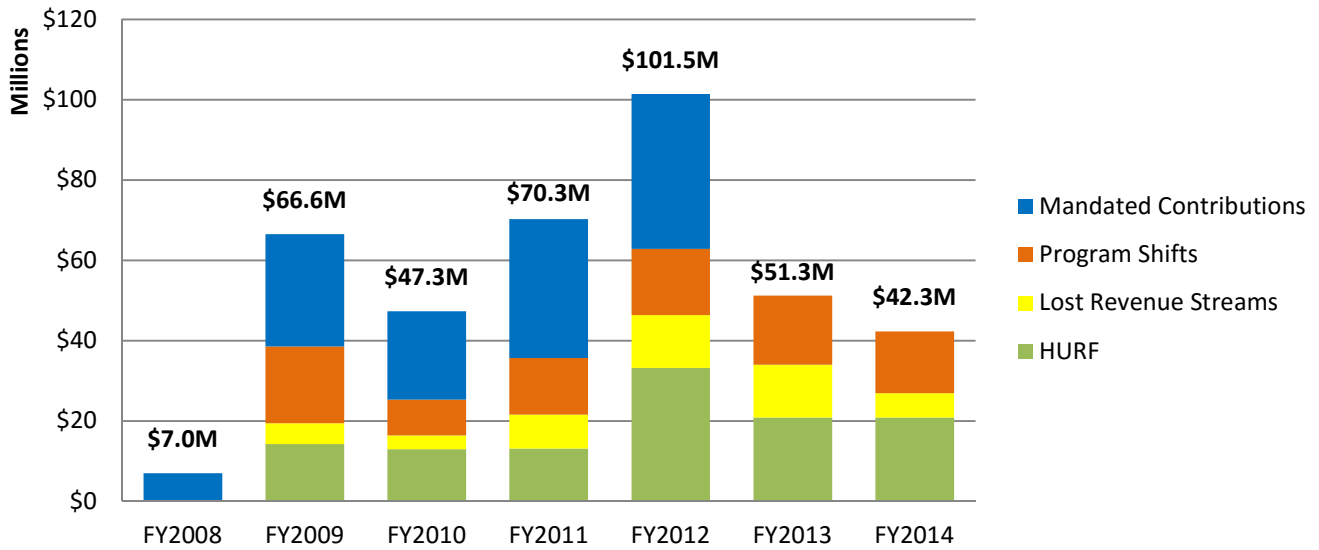
Difficult financial times ahead for counties

(Statewide net assessed value and primary property tax revenue for counties)



PROPERTY VALUES AND REVENUE CONTINUE TO DECLINE AS THE STATE BUDGET IMPACTS COUNTIES FOR A 6TH YEAR

FY2008-FY2014 Budget Impacts



SVP Costs to Maricopa County

