

# One more budget trick exposed

By Union-Tribune Editorial Board /h5>

midnight, July 1, 2011

There was a fortuitous coincidence this week. The same day Gov. Jerry Brown cut a budget deal with Democratic lawmakers that is only balanced because of tricks and gimmicks, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a lower-court ruling that could wipe out up to \$350 million a year the state has been receiving because of a past budget gambit.

It was orchestrated by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who in 2003 told Indian tribes with casinos in California that they could only add slot machines if the state got a big chunk of the additional revenue this would generate. Many tribes jumped at the offer.

But not the Rincon Band of Luiseno Indians, joint operator of the Harrah's Rincon Casino north of Escondido, which argued the demand violated a federal law saying states could only impose de facto fees or taxes to cover the costs of additional infrastructure or services created by a casino's effects on surrounding communities. The high court agreed. The state is now required to negotiate a deal on slots with the tribe, and other tribes are expected to demand renegotiations, meaning the already-shaky budget is very likely to be further undermined as tribes keep more of their gaming revenue.

This should be a reminder to Brown and lawmakers that budget tricks often blow up. But given the back-patting on display over this week's dubious budget deal, we won't hold our breath.