

News Release



Controller of the State of California - Kathleen Connell

300 Capitol Mall, Suite 1850
Sacramento, California 95814

Contact: *Byron Tucker, (916) 445-2636*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATE CONTROLLER LAUNCHES TWO NEW SERVICES ON THE INTERNET

*Web Site Helps Holocaust Survivors and Heirs Reclaim Property In Swiss Banks;
New "Government at a Glance" Profiles Economic Health of California Counties*

SACRAMENTO, Aug. 20, 1998 -- State Controller Kathleen Connell today unveiled the latest enhancements to the Internet home page of the Controller's Office, stating that such services reflect her commitment to improve public access to government information and decision making.

"The services we're adding today represent two important areas where the Internet offers greater opportunities to serve ordinary citizens," said Connell. "Our new link to the Holocaust Claims Processing Office, in New York, will help individuals who may have a claim to property currently held by Swiss banks to research and file that claim. This is property that might otherwise never be returned to its rightful owners or heirs."

This new addition to the Controller's Web site encourages owners of assets held or deposited with Swiss banks between January 1, 1933, and May 9, 1945, or their heirs, to contact the Holocaust Claims Processing Office. It is believed many of these accounts, which have seen no activity since the end of World War II, belonged to Holocaust victims and survivors. The Swiss Bankers Association published a list last year of 1,800 names on bank accounts that have been dormant since that time. The World Jewish Congress has published a list of 1,300 foreign accounts held by the Swiss Bank Corporation in New York that were frozen during the war.

-- more --

The other new service Connell announced today is *Government at a Glance*, which presents easy-to-understand budget and statistical summaries for individual counties in California. "This is information the counties are required to file with the State Controller's Office, but until today it was published primarily for government officials and financial experts, not the average citizen. Given the significant impact that budget decisions have on the lives of ordinary people, it makes sense that information about how government spends tax dollars should be easy to access and easy to understand," Connell explained.

Information presented for each county includes total annual revenues and expenditures for fiscal year 1995-96, the most current available, and the percentage of each county's budget spent on personnel, courts, corrections, public health, welfare, libraries, recreation and culture. Web site visitors can also click on comparison pages that show how each county ranks in a particular category. A comprehensive *User's Guide to Government at a Glance* explains the financial information in lay terms. Other pertinent indicators of the counties' fiscal health are also listed.

Government at a Glance also provides information on unemployment rates, per capita income, population in poverty, and welfare caseloads. County supervisors and administrators are listed, along with numbers for contacting them. Hyperlinks for accessing official county Web sites are also included.

"It's vital for citizens to be informed on how budget decisions affect their daily lives," said Connell. "Taxpayers who visit this site will learn how their own county measures up against other counties in the state in terms of their spending priorities, the amount of their budget that's going to public health, corrections or to pay off debt, and whether their revenues and expenditures are going up or down. This will give the average citizen a better understanding of how budget decisions are made, as well as help them shape these decisions."

Visitors to the Controller's Office home page (<http://www.sco.ca.gov>) access the new services by selecting the appropriate icon from the main menu. A link to the state's unclaimed property bureau is expected to be added shortly.

###