Surprising many of his longtime allies, Gov. Edwin Edwards laid out a plan Sunday to alter state tax and spending policies that embraces conservative fiscal philosophy and targets some political sacred cows.

Edwards recommended imposition of a debt limit, a spending ceiling and other steps to prevent the state from living beyond taxpayers' means.

He also called for a reduction in the homestead exemption — from $75,000 to $50,000 — and removal of personal income tax caps that are in the constitution.

Edwards said it is time to change the state's fiscal policies and that failure to act will plunge the state into the same kind of bankrupt situation California is facing today.

"Now I say to you, there is a time to bellyache, and a time to belly up; a time to hide, and a time to side," Edwards said in an address to the opening session of the constitutional convention. "We may continue to hide from our problems and bellyache about conditions, but I suggest that if we belly up and side with those who are willing to help us restore order and fiscal responsibility in our government, the time has come."