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### ***Don't Balance Budget on Children's Backs, Say Parents and Students***

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — *Parents and Students for Great Schools*, a coalition representing the voices of more than a half million low- and moderate-income California families, today issued the following statement responding to the release of Governor Schwarzenegger's 2008-09 budget:

"We are gravely concerned with the Governor's proposal to cut education by \$400M in the middle of this year and suspend Prop 98 next year to cut \$4B.

"This proposal is unworkable and reckless. California already ranks 43d in the nation in per-pupil spending. Our children can't afford for our schools to drop below an already insufficient level of funding. At the very least, we should make good on the budget passed just four months ago and retain the \$4B required next year under Prop 98.

"Problem-solving the current budget situation will take creative solutions. Taking all forms of revenue enhancement off the table unnecessarily ties our hands. Borrowing against the future by suspending Prop 98 simply postpones our financial responsibilities and is not the answer for our students, our schools, and our state.

"Our current situation again points to the need for developing a road map this year for reaching our goal of adequate and predictable funding for education, along with comprehensive reform to ensure the funding works better. We are glad to hear the Governor is committed to discussing a framework for education reform over the next year and developing solutions and a long-term action plan.

"We also are pleased to see funding allocated in the budget to develop and improve CalPADS and CalTIDES. We need reliable data on which parents and students can base decisions and policymakers can base reforms.

"But our children's education should not be put at risk while reform is coming. The Governor's budget would have California schools falling even further behind. This is something we cannot afford."

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*Parents and Students for Great Schools* is a coalition of leading grassroots and advocacy organizations — California ACORN, Californians for Justice, PICO California and Public Advocates — working to ensure that students and parents have a voice on education reform. The coalition works from two basic premises: (1) every child in California deserves the opportunity to succeed in school, and (2) California schools must respond to the needs and expectations of those most directly affected: parents and students.

As part of this effort, we released “*Now That We Have the Facts*,” a report detailing the results of our survey of 5600 low and moderate income parents, students, and community members from throughout the state. With this report, California’s parents and students not only voice their concerns, their priorities and their commitments for education reform, they also stake their claim to a seat at the table in crafting those reforms. Among the key findings: 86 percent of survey respondents said they would be willing to pay more taxes to improve California schools if there is increased accountability, transparency and local involvement in deciding how education dollars are spent. See <http://parentsandstudents.org/>

For more information, please contact the organizations and individuals below:

**California ACORN** ([www.california.acorn.org](http://www.california.acorn.org)) is an affiliate of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, a national grassroots, community-based organization of low- and moderate-income families working together for social justice and stronger communities. California ACORN is composed of 37,000 member families in 22 cities throughout California. Contact Corina Vasaure at 510-866-5117 or [caaisj@aisj.org](mailto:caaisj@aisj.org).

**Californians for Justice** ([www.caljustice.org](http://www.caljustice.org)) is a statewide, grassroots organization dedicated to building power in communities that have been pushed to the margins of the political process. Contact Solomon Rivera at 323-899-6794 or [solomon@caljustice.org](mailto:solomon@caljustice.org).

**PICO California** ([www.picocalifornia.org](http://www.picocalifornia.org)) is part of the PICO National Network of faith-based community organizations and represents 450,000 families in 73 cities throughout the state. PICO works to create innovative solutions to pressing community issues and build a legacy of leadership in communities. Contact Roberta Furger at 510-703-6357 or [roberta@picocalifornia.org](mailto:roberta@picocalifornia.org).

**Public Advocates** ([www.publicadvocates.org](http://www.publicadvocates.org)) Public Advocates Inc. is a non-profit law firm and advocacy organization that challenges the systemic causes of poverty and racial discrimination by strengthening community voices in public policy and achieving tangible legal victories advancing education, housing and transit equity. Contact John Affeldt at 415-595-9563 or [jaffeldt@publicadvocates.org](mailto:jaffeldt@publicadvocates.org).