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## ***California Parents, Students Say Start Education Reform Now***

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 State of the State address:

“We're pleased that the Governor acknowledged the need to both reform our education system and to fund reform. This reflects the strong views expressed in our recent survey of parents and students that they expect real, dramatic and comprehensive change from their policymakers. We share the Governor's concerns that California needs an effective data system allowing us to accurately track dropout and graduation rates, needs to recruit and train 100,000 new teachers and needs more counselors. And we agree: 'no more waiting - we must act on behalf of the children.'”

**“We believe now is the best time for California to develop a comprehensive roadmap for education reform, including funding reform.** Rather than avoiding talking about money, this year's bleak fiscal outlook provides an excellent opportunity to take a long-term view that addresses both system reform and prepares the state to best use the \$6-7 billion in increased Prop 98 revenue expected to start flowing to education in 2010.

“Business, education leaders and advocates for children all agree that California needs a comprehensive data system. This can be accomplished this year for little cost. Determining how best to reform California's irrational, insufficient and unequal funding system and the inequitable distribution of qualified teachers should also begin now.

“We are eager for the public release of the report from the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence (GCEE) and encourage the Governor and the Legislature to use this report, along with the findings from the Stanford-led Getting Down to Facts studies to take a holistic look at education reform in California.

“Traditional stakeholders have already begun expressing skepticism that major reform can be initiated this year. We disagree. The status quo is no longer acceptable. We need to take the long view and begin the work now to improve schools and school funding for all students. We encourage policymakers and all education stakeholder groups to join us in embracing comprehensive reform now, and ensuring that parents and students—the actual consumers of public education—be included in these important conversations.”

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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, *Parents and Students for Great Schools* 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. 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 Vasare 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).