



California Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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Educators Make Case at Capitol
Budget Cuts Undercut Progress Made
Seek a Fair, Balanced Solution to Budget Crisis

SACRAMENTO, CA - Hundreds of teachers and education workers from across California, members of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), spent Monday advocating for a fair and balanced solution to the State's budget crisis. Teachers from early childhood through 12th grade, University of California lecturers, adult educators, school support personnel and part-time community college faculty came to the Capitol to advocate for a balanced approach to solving the State's woeful fiscal crisis.

"California faces a horrible budget deficit, and it is hurting education," said CFT President Mary Bergan. "We have an emergency, and we must begin to address it as such, immediately, with a balanced approach combining cuts, loans and revenues. The latest \$1.5 billion in proposed cuts come on top of more than \$5 billion already made. At the end of next year, school funding will be less than it was two years ago. We are going backwards instead of protecting the gains we've made."

Bergan added, "As bad as the revised budget proposal is, it could have been a lot worse. We recognize that Governor Davis has tried to protect education from even more devastating cutbacks."

The teachers applauded the Governor for keeping education a top priority in his revised budget, but are dismayed by the program cuts and, teacher and school employee layoffs that will occur. The teachers are pushing for other revenue options to help pay for education and other vital social programs.

"Thousands of teachers will still be laid off," said Bergan. "Schools are going to be fiscally worse off than last year. When we open school in September there will be fewer teachers teaching. We prefer the progressive tax options we have proposed, including restoring the top income tax brackets and taxing oil as it is taken from the ground. "

Bergan said, "A sales tax is the least attractive choice to us, since it falls more heavily on those who can least afford it. However, recognizing the severity of the financial problems we face, we reluctantly accept a sales tax increase to help resolve the current budget crisis.

We do not accept reduced taxes on the most wealthy. And California, the only state in the nation that doesn't tax oil production, must enact an oil severance tax. Should children, the poor, and the disabled be the only ones to bear the burden here?"

"We can't solve the budget problem with smoke and mirrors," added Bergan. "We are concerned about rolling over too much of the budget deficit into the future. We place the deficit rollover and sales tax increase in that category. We don't like them, but we will swallow the bitter pill to help solve the budget crisis. Others need to do the same."

United Educators of San Francisco President Kent Mitchell lamented the budget uncertainty hanging over public schools, "It is heaping more damage onto that caused by the cuts themselves."

"Teachers must know if they are going to have jobs, or we will lose the youngest and brightest and may never get them back," add Mitchell.

"We have got to pass a State Budget by June 30th in order to be ready for school after the summer. We call upon the Legislature to adopt a Budget by the June 30 deadline, and do it with a fair balance of cuts and revenues."

Community Colleges:

CFT Community College Council President Marty Hittelman noted the effects of the budget on the community college system.

"Fees charged to California community college students have never helped the colleges," said Hittelman. "The revenue from fees has been used as a regressive tax to support the general fund, and at the same time, it has resulted in decreases in student enrollment."

"Per unit fees would jump from \$11 to \$18 under the governor's revised proposal, which would be a \$210 fee increase for a full-time student. The fees proposed by the governor would predictably reduce enrollment in the California Community Colleges by about 190,000 students. In contrast, UC total enrollment in 2001-02 was 184,000 students. The decreases are concentrated on low to middle income, Black and Hispanic students."

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As the statewide affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the CFT represents over 120,000 teachers and school employees in California, from early education through the university level.