


FLOOR ALERT – FLOOR ALERT

August 29, 2008

To: Members of the California State Senate 
From: Jeffery M. Freitas, Legislative Representative

RE: Senate Budget Proposal

Position: OPPOSE

Representing faculty
and classified workers in
public and private schools
and colleges, from early
childhood through higher
education

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American Federation of
Teachers, AFL-CIO

The California Federation of Teachers, AFT, AFL-CIO, which represents 90,000 faculty and other school employees in public and private schools and colleges, from early childhood through higher education, opposes any budget bill that jeopardizes current and future funding for education. The Proposed Comprise of the 2008-09 Budget by the Governor with revisions by the Senate harms education. The following are positions we have on key elements of this compromise:

- **The budget must provide at a minimum the level of funding contained in the Conference Committee report.** The \$59.1 billion for Proposition 98 restores a billion dollars in cuts proposed by the Governor in the May Revision and provides for a cost-of-living adjustment of 2.1 percent (still far below the statutory COLA of 5.66%). K-14 education has already suffered significant cuts, either through the \$507 million reduction in mid-year cuts or the \$2 billion cut from the workload budget in the Conference Committee Report.
- **We oppose any additional spending cap that will harm California's public education by providing arbitrary restrictions at a time when additional investments are needed.** Regardless of what measure you cite, California is still below the national average for per pupil spending. Our nationally high standards are not matched by our dismally low funding for education. A spending cap would prohibit future Californians from increasing investments in public education and other government services, even if they are overwhelmingly desired to do so. This opposition includes any de facto spending cap through increasing the level and restrictions of a rainy day fund.
- **We oppose handing over unilateral budgetary power from the Legislature to the Governor to make mid-year cuts.** This disregards the obligation and eliminates the debate over the priorities of the state. The current process established by Proposition 58 provides a mechanism for mid-year reductions when a fiscal emergency is declared. This process was successfully demonstrated just this past budget year, when the Legislature and Governor approved \$7 billion in spending reductions for 2007-08. Allowing such action to occur unilaterally, without a check by the Legislature, sets a dangerous precedence that violates the balance of power between the Legislature and the Governor.
- **The budget must be built upon permanent and ongoing structural revenues that are progressive and not regressive.** The one cent sales tax in the proposal is only short term, and it is a regressive tax that burdens the hard working families that are already being harmed by the proposed cuts. The revenue increases proposed in the Conference Committee Report are progressive and shares the burden of the state budget deficit.

We recognize the challenge before you to enact a fair and balance budget; however, a compromise that further harms education must not be passed. Therefore, we ask you to vote "NO" on the Proposed Compromised Budget or any slight revisions of the proposal.