



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

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## **California Has One Option Left to Stop the Bleeding**

*This piece was co-authored by Joshua Pechthalt and Anthony Thigpenn  
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Campaign*

When we think of California, we imagine the state that allowed the three of us to be who we are, a state that gave us the California Dream. For years now, that dream has been quickly slipping away and now it's in danger of being lost forever.

California is not in crisis; crises are sudden and acute. California is in a chronic, grinding decline and it's providing a window into America's tomorrow. Here we have the richest and poorest, the most diverse population, high technology centers which lead the globe. And yet, here with 38 million people -- 20% of the United States -- we cannot find a path to leave the bounty that invigorated us for the next generation.

The answer will not come from Sacramento, just as on the national level it cannot come from Washington. It needs to come from all of us. It's simple: government has a central role in providing the basics of civilization and that costs money.

The first step is admitting that we need more money to pay for our present, much less our future. That's why it's time for the 1%, those who benefited the most from our state's past investments, to invest in our state's future. Our state needs perhaps \$20 billion a year in new revenue to assure that kids grow up to lead. That will take time, but for now, we see a clear path to \$6 billion or so a year that would at the

very least restore a large portion of the most recent cuts to education, healthcare, safety and transportation. All it takes is the 1% chipping in and paying more income tax.

Warren Buffett said it best: "If anything, taxes for the lower and middle class and maybe even the upper middle class should even probably be cut further. But I think that people at the high end -- people like myself -- should be paying a lot more in taxes. We have it better than we've ever had it."

It's been a brutal decade for most Californians. Our schools, universities, hospitals, roads, and bridges -- which used to be the envy of the nation -- are in tatters. The unemployment rate hovers around 12%, and Sacramento continues to talk only about what to cut next, perpetuating the downward spiral.

Students are rightfully disgusted as they take to the streets and create their own Occupy encampments to protest the relentless inflation of tuition at California's legendary colleges and universities. Working families who dream of providing their children with a higher education watch in horror as costs continue to skyrocket.

A couple of weeks from now, we face a massive \$2 billion in additional cuts that will be "triggered" based on a summer budget deal passed on a wishful premise that the economy will get better before it gets worse. On the front lines once again will be children, the elderly, and disabled. The axe will fall on everything from public schools (where California already ranks 47th in per pupil spending) to in-home health care.

A Washington Post-Bloomberg News [poll](#) from last month shows that 68% of all Americans support raising taxes on households with incomes of \$250,000 per year and higher. Gov. Brown could also take his cue from the patron saint of fiscally conservative Republicans, former California governor Ronald Reagan, who raised taxes as governor and president numerous times, knowing it was for the good of our state and country.

Should every child in California have access to an excellent, rigorous, free education through college and beyond? Should they have healthcare to assure that their minds are sharp and their bodies fit? Should they know that at any point after high school, whether they choose college or another path, they can find a good job? Should they be the sail that lifts our economy to new heights in energy and technology solutions of tomorrow?

Yes.

We believe in our state. We believe in our country. We are patriots of the first order who know that true love of state or country manifests not in slogans, but in deeds that offer a brighter future to the next generation than to ours.

The time has come to say yes to our dreams. The time has come for the 1% to join the fray and help rebuild our state and our country. Let them come forth and pledge with us to invest in tomorrow, starting today.

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