



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

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*Contact: Steve Hopcraft, 916.457.5546; steve@hopcraft.com;
Fred Glass, 510.579.3343, cftoakland@igc.org*

**Educators respond to Governor's Budget,
Constitutional Amendment proposals;
Local "Race to the Top" participation;
Launch "Fight for California's Future"**

SACRAMENTO - California Federation of Teachers (CFT) President Marty Hittelman responded to the governor's State of the State address, budget proposals, and proposal for a constitutional amendment, in a news conference at the CFT Sacramento office today. Hittelman also addressed comments to "Race to the Top" legislation passed last week with the support of the governor, and announced the launch of a CFT campaign, the "Fight for California's Future," as an alternative to the governor's position that "we have no choice" but to further reduce important social programs.

The governor's budget:

"Governor Schwarzenegger is leaving a clear legacy – a legacy of saying one thing and doing the opposite," said Hittelman. "On Wednesday, he claims he is not going to cut education; but on Friday he proposes to reduce the Proposition 98 guarantee by \$892 million in 2009-10 and \$1.5 million in 2010-11. The governor proposes to eliminate the sales tax on gasoline (which helps fund Proposition 98) and increase the fuel excise tax (which does not help fund Proposition 98). How does that protect education?"

"The \$892 million reduction in 2009-10 is more than the maximum that California could receive over four years in the Race to the Top funding, which the governor claims is so important to California. Of course, the more than \$17 billion in cuts to

CFT news release, Budget response, 1.12.10; page 2

education over the last two years dwarfs both of these amounts. Schwarzenegger is using the budget crisis to promote some of his favorite issues, none of which would benefit the majority of people in California,” said Hittelman.

“Race to the top” legislation:

- **Context: The money is clearly not the issue for the governor**

“First, he cuts \$17 billion over the past two years from education, and suggests another \$1.5 billion in state reductions in this budget proposal. Then he turns around and says we need the \$700 million in federal money. Clearly, the money isn’t the priority. He supports Race to the Top as a way to force his values on California’s educational systems,” Hittelman said.

- **The “reforms” that the governor wants will do little to improve education and in some cases will do actual harm.**

Charter provisions: charters are no panacea; studies show as much success and lack of progress in charter schools as in our ongoing school structures.

Pay for performance: Has never been shown to be effective at increasing learning. It has been shown to upset cooperative efforts within schools.

Open enrollment: only parents who can afford to send their children to non-neighborhood schools will be able to benefit from SB 4.

Parent trigger: no educational justification is required, just 50% of parent signatures on a petition, which can then create chaos, divert attention from the work of education, wreck the lives of students, teachers, principals, and community as schools are closed or turned over to new operators with no track record of success. The 50% threshold is only likely to be met when someone with money comes in to organize the parents in order to form a school under their control.

Data on student performance: Data can be helpful if used to inform teachers of what is working and what is not. But it is an expensive and difficult proposition to implement.

- **This legislation further underfunds education and implements mostly unfunded mandates.** “Many school districts have already opted out of California’s Race to the Top proposal, as it will likely result in unfunded requirements with uncertain benefits. California was already 47th in the nation in per pupil spending before last year’s cuts. Few districts can afford to participate, and many (e.g., Ventura, Santa Rosa) are already opting out,” Hittelman said.

- **The CFT will not sign the state proposal** to the federal government to support California's plan for Race to the Top as there is no official plan to support. Our locals are still free to sign on to their districts' Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) if they so decide.

Constitutional Amendment:

“The governor is proposing a cynical constitutional amendment to boost the percentage of public higher education spending over prison spending. While we agree with the intent to increase higher education funding and reduce prison funding, the governor has already demonstrated his lack of commitment to public higher education. Last year Governor Schwarzenegger and the Legislature reduced CSU funding by \$500 million, and UC by \$800 million. Now he is using concern over the future of UC and the CSU to promote his long-standing goal to privatize prisons,” said Hittelman.

“The proposal he has come up with does nothing to insure prison population reduction, or to limit tuition fee hikes at UC, CSU or community colleges. Working families are being priced out of public higher education. UC student fees are now over \$10,000 per year. CSU student fees are nearing \$5,000.

There's a reason police and firefighting are public functions, and the same goes for public education and public health. We are not in favor of taking incarceration out of the hands of public accountability and allowing private interests to profit from the misery of the incarcerated. This will not lead to better rehabilitation of prisoners, or necessarily save the state money.

Currently and historically, there are great problems with privatizing prisons: for example, just last week in Kentucky the state's governor ordered 400 women removed from a Corrections Corporation of America-run prison after continuing allegations of sexual misconduct and assaults by male guards. They will be returned to a state run prison.

Corrections Corporation of America, the largest private prison company in the country, contributed \$100,000 to Schwarzenegger's failed “Budget Reform Act” ballot measure last April. The governor's proposal for a constitutional amendment to privatize prisons must be a coincidence.

CFT news release, Budget response, 1.12.10; page 4

Rather than this, the people of California should support AB 656, Assemblyman Torrico's proposal for an oil severance tax to help fund UC, CSU and the community colleges.

Fight for California's Future:

"The California Federation of Teachers has an alternative to these bad ideas. We are launching a campaign, the Fight for California's Future, to protest the cuts proposed for education and other vital public services, to restore California state government so that it works for all the people, and to secure the state's future through fair, progressive tax policies. We will be joining with other education groups on March 4 for a day of action around the state, and the following day will kick off a march from Bakersfield to Sacramento with a coalition of organizations to highlight these issues and alternatives to provide for a positive California future," Hittelman said.

Over the past fifteen years the top one percent of California income earners has increased its share of income from 13% to 25%, but its tax responsibility has gone down from 11.3% to 9.3%, leaving the state without 5-6 billion dollars/year. Last year, the governor's budget lost the state billions of dollars of corporate taxes in the long term in exchange for a modest short-term boost; we will work to repeal this corporate loophole. We will also advocate for a split roll tax, and other progressive taxes that ask the most affluent to do their fair part to help the state.

"We don't think the problem is that the majority of Californians don't like taxes. Most polling says otherwise. The problem is that to raise taxes takes 2/3 of the Legislature instead of a simple majority, and just over one third of the legislature has taken a "no new tax" pledge circulated by Grover Norquist, a man whose stated goal is to destroy government services that benefit working families," said Hittelman.

The Campaign for California's Future will educate the public about how this works over the next months and years, and ultimately we will help turn California around.

For more information please visit www.cft.org.

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