



9 Million Reasons To Speak Up

FACT SHEET

Governor Schwarzenegger's proposed 2010-11 budget calls for cutting education by at least *another* \$2.4 billion and decimating children's healthcare and family services. PTA strongly opposes this proposal. The time is now for the Governor and Legislature to put children first.

There are 9 million AND FIVE reasons why we must speak up for children.

1. **California's more than 9 million children are our future. It is our duty to protect their well-being and invest in their education.**

The Governor and Legislature must take the lead in providing adequate resources to support children's health, safety and education. The [Governor's Commission on Education Excellence](#) states, "Successful schools are critical to the health of our democracy and the future economic health of our state." Every time California decides to underfund programs to protect the well-being and education of children, it falls further behind in its ability to produce a healthy, well-educated population to lead us forward.

2. **In the past two years, the state has cut \$17 billion from schools, and deep cuts to social services have added to the burden borne by the children and families most in need of help.**

Last year was a devastating year for California's children. When the going got rough due to the state's budget crunch, children suffered the most. Clearly, these are tough economic times in our state, and careful budget planning is needed. However, the economic climate cannot justify the shortsighted decision-making regarding investments in children.

California's education system already ranks nearly last in the nation in terms of per-student funding. This has resulted in some of the largest class sizes in the country, and the highest number of students per counselor, school nurse or other critical support staff members. Make no mistake, the last two years of cuts will result in a serious decline in the quality of our schools, as school districts are forced to significantly increase class sizes and cut academic support classes, lay off reading specialists, counselors, librarians and school nurses. We will see fewer arts and music classes. And our ability to provide students with up-to-date technological resources and hands-on science programs to prepare them for the global economy will continue to be jeopardized.

The final 2009-10 budget cut more than \$2 billion from California's healthcare system, primarily by cutting or eliminating services for low-income patients and providers, community clinics, children, rural residents, and other programs for those most in need of help. The \$528 million cut in the CalWORKs program to aid families living in poverty additionally hurt these families.

Last year, about 93,000 children waited uninsured for Healthy Families coverage until the cut was averted by non-government donations and higher cost sharing for 269,000 children on the program. This year, the Governor proposes to entirely eliminate both Healthy Families and CalWORKs, along with cuts to other programs, unless the federal government comes through with a bailout.

3. **Investing in children benefits all California taxpayers.**

In its 2009 Report, [The Benefits to Taxpayers from Increases in Students' Educational Attainment](#), the RAND Institute found, "Raising students' levels of education yields net benefits to the public budget through higher tax contributions and reductions in spending on social support and incarceration."

Investing more in children's health and education is necessary, and it is critical to California's ability to achieve long-term economic recovery. A study released by Children Now, a leading nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, shows the issues weakening California children's well-being are undermining the economic prosperity of the state as a whole. The [2010](#)

[California Report Card: Setting the Agenda for Children](#) shows that the current deficiencies in children's health and education policy are leading to significant, negative outcomes for all Californians. These include increased healthcare costs and decreased economic output. For example, 1 million children in California are expected to be without health insurance. It costs Californians an estimated \$7,000 every time an uninsured child visits a hospital for a preventable ailment. In contrast, only 17 percent of that amount (\$1,200) is needed to provide health coverage for each uninsured child.

A 2009 report by Georgetown University ([Weathering the Storm](#)) found that despite unprecedented fiscal challenges, 23 states found a way to invest more in children's healthcare by actually *increasing* the number of children and families receiving health coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Care Program (CHIP). And 18 states increased their Medicaid and CHIP income eligibility levels so that more families could afford health coverage. California was one of only three states to reduce coverage.

4. The majority of Californians support new revenues to protect our schools from further cuts.

The general public wants to see more investment in our children! PTA and all Californians have consistently supported public education and children during both prosperous and unstable economic times. According to the [Public Policy Institute of California survey](#) (January 2010), the majority of Californians feel strongly that K-12 public education is the most important area to protect from budget cuts. The survey also revealed that most Californians would be willing to pay higher taxes to maintain current funding for public schools. The Governor and the Legislature have run out of excuses – the fact is Californians want students protected from budget cuts.

PTA supports changing the state budget legislative vote requirement from two-thirds to 55 percent. California is one of only three states in the nation with this supermajority requirement. It's time break the legislative gridlock that has resulted in chronically late budgets with insufficient resources for education and children's programs.

In addition, PTA supports [The Local Control of Local Classrooms Funding Act](#), a proposal that would allow local school funding measures for school district programs to be approved by a 55 percent vote (instead of the current 66.7 percent requirement). It will allow the voter threshold for passage to be the same as for local school bond measures – with requirements that all programs to be funded be clearly defined and presented to voters, and that there be a provision for independent oversight as funds are spent. If approved by voters, the act would support quality education and strengthen local control by letting communities commit stable, reliable local funds to their schools. PTA is participating in the signature-gathering effort to qualify this proposition for the November 2010 ballot. A legislative proposal by Senator Joe Simitian (SCA-6), also supported by PTA, would authorize a similar measure to be placed before voters.

5. The time is NOW. Our children do not have the luxury of waiting without devastating consequences.

We cannot sit on the sidelines while budget cuts threaten an entire generation of children. New cuts to schools would contradict educational policy reforms as part of the state's application for federal Race to the Top funds. Further cuts to programs supporting children's health and safety would be intolerable and unconscionable. Our state budget should reflect the values of our citizens. We can't race to the top if we sink to the bottom in our investment in children.

PTA, the largest child advocacy organization in California, invites you to join with us at this critical moment.

We are calling on the Legislature to do the following.

- **Provide additional stable revenues in the 2010-11 state budget, to invest in children and in California's future.**
- **Reduce the voting margin for passage of both the California state budget and revenue measures in the California Legislature, as well as local school program funding measures, from the current two-thirds to a 55-percent vote or simple majority.**

[Click here to join PTA!](#) Anyone who cares about children and youth is welcome.

Speak up for children.

(How many more reasons do you need?)

Please visit the [California State PTA website](#) – www.capta.org – for more information.