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## **STATEMENT FROM CALIFORNIA FACULTY ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT LILLIAN TAIZ ON THE DEFEAT OF PROP 1A**

The California State University and other vital public services avoided a severe setback for the state's future prospects when voters rejected Proposition 1A on Tuesday.

As a result, we will not write into the state constitution a permanent limit on the state's commitment to college opportunity.

While CSU faculty, staff and students are relieved at this outcome, the state's critical lack of leadership and budget dysfunction remain. Severe additional cutbacks to our state universities are likely, and have been likely regardless of the outcomes of this election.

There will be no victory until California figures out how to solve real problems with realistic, responsible policies.

The rejection of Prop 1A is a message to our elected officials and state policy leaders to do better, try harder, and find answers in a new, more transparent and open manner.

Voter rejection of Prop 1A is a vote FOR a better future, one that is not crippled by harsh, auto-pilot formulas; one that is not attenuated by a governor with unfettered budget-cutting powers.

The voters agreed that Proposition 1A was a bad idea. We are still in need of good ideas.

### **CFA'S GOOD IDEA**

Many so-called solutions have been floated that would pit one part of our kids' education against another, or that pit teachers against each other, or that set education against health care and services for the mentally ill. These are wrong choices.

To address at least part of the immediate and long-term crises with a rational solution, CFA offers a good idea.

We have sponsored AB 656 in the state legislature, authored by Assemblymember Alberto Torrico, to establish an oil and natural gas severance tax to fund our system of higher education in a manner that works successfully in Texas. This tax would be structured to

come out of oil company profits and would not take funding away from any other public need.

We call on elected leaders, leaders of public education, and Californians to embrace AB 656 on behalf of public higher education. And we encourage our leadership to seek other sensible answers to funding health care and other public goods.

The gimmicks have failed. Let's get on with the real business of making California work.

## **ON THE CRISIS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION**

In our contact with voters during this campaign we encountered widespread worry about the future of our public education system, from pre-kindergarten all the way to a college degree. A large segment of voters are dismayed by attempts to use smoke and mirrors to address education funding — one of the most fundamental issues in the future of any society.

California, in fact, is falling behind rapidly on education at all levels, and voters are well aware of it.

It is time for every stakeholder in public education, everyone who believes that education is a public good that must receive state support, to come together to make a plan that will move us beyond this crisis.

This planning must include teachers and employee unions in every segment of education, parent and student organizations, education administrations and management, plus those local, state and federal elected officials who are not ideologically opposed to public education.

## **ON THE 'CONFIDENCE GAP' REGARDING CALIFORNIA'S LEADERS**

Even while California sinks deeper into political disorganization, it is striking that Californians have become optimistic and engaged by the entirely different kind of leadership that has emerged at the national level.

A poll by the Public Policy Institute of California shows that while a large majority of Californians are disgusted by the failures of leadership at the state level, an equally large majority has confidence in our new national leadership — even though the nation also continues to struggle with economic uncertainty.

Californians favor the national policy that is steadily unraveling the failed policies of the past eight years. The new leadership has defined a vision of a more unified, responsible nation characterized by a frank public assessment of what it will take to achieve that vision.

California's elected and appointed leaders in the legislature as well as in public institutions like the California State University need to shake off the "Bush-think" that has characterized policy-making for the past eight years, leave behind the tired ideologies of a

discredited era, and open up to new ways to fulfill the public services essential to a humane, quality society in a manner that is intelligent and open to public view.

## **ON THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Our CSU community is already in the throes of a deep crisis. Most Californians have heard about it either through the news or from their own families — 450,000 students and 50,000 employees touch millions of lives beyond our 23 campuses.

Because of this crisis, fewer people will be going to public colleges and universities. It is unknown how many have given up on college because of tuition increases and other rising costs. Those students who hang in are finding it impossible to graduate in four years because necessary classes are not available. Teachers and student service workers are losing jobs.

Just as the recipe for success is more education, the recipe for the failure of an economy is less education.

## **ON WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE CRISIS**

To our CSU faculty and staff colleagues, we urge you to remember that Proposition 1A was a flawed plan that would have slammed a long-term lid on CSU funding. It would not have brought one additional dime into the state budget this year or next. The critical lack of revenue for state general fund operations, which include the CSU, remains regardless of Prop 1A.

By defeating Prop 1A, there remains a door to improving the CSU budget when the state's economy picks up. A better future is still possible.

At this moment, however, the truth is that we face a huge fight to protect the CSU budget this year. This fight would confront us even if Prop 1A had passed. The governor's new plans in either of his Prop 1A pass or fail scenarios, which at this moment are still very sketchy, threaten more deep cuts to the CSU.

We expect much blame to be heaped on the failure of Prop 1A.

Unfortunately, we anticipate that the CSU Chancellor and the governor will blame every cut they make on the failure of Prop 1A and on its opponents, including CFA.

However, the fact remains that Proposition 1A was a bad idea at any time.

We in the CSU community must return the challenge by calling on the CSU's top executives and Board of Trustees to exert more aggressive leadership in this time of crisis. Over the 10 years that Charles Reed has served as Chancellor, per-student state spending has declined, even in good state budget years. When adjusted for inflation, this decline is dramatic. He must not cooperate in this decline any longer.

This is a moment when the Chancellor can step up to the plate and be the leader the CSU needs. This is the time for him to advance bold new ideas. At the very least, he can embrace one good idea that is already in play — AB 656, the bill to create dedicated funding for the CSU.

The state university is at the edge of a cliff. It is our top leader's job to defend it, no matter what other interests get in the way.

## **ON TAXATION & PUBLIC INVESTMENT**

Some voters rejected Proposition 1A over taxes. Many voters are unhappy about extending sales taxes that fall heavier on Californians who live lower on the income ladder. Others were angry that large corporations negotiated a pass on their tax responsibilities. These were flaws in Proposition 1A.

Some voters are ideologically opposed to contributing their fair share and will not support any form of public investment in our common needs. They have removed themselves from the commitment to our society and such rigidity sets them outside any meaningful search for solutions.

We hope that Californians who actually care about our democracy and society have learned that it is unwise to compromise with those who want to permanently shrink public services by writing into the constitution automatic spending limits regardless of the public investment we need to advance our economy and society. This awareness is rising among voters who rejected Proposition 1A.

At the same time, part of any rational solution to the crisis must include tax fairness reflected through a more equitable system in which all individuals and businesses contribute their fair share to investments in our state's future and well-being. There is no avoiding our common responsibility to the common good through gimmicks and postponements.

*For more information and interviews with California Faculty Association officers, please contact Alice Sunshine at 510-382-1967 or Lisa Cohen at 310-395-2544.*

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