

# Californians for Justice

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**Statement on the 2010 California Budget**

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## California's Bad Math Hurts Students of Color

### 2010-11 Budget Suspends Proposition 98 and Cuts \$3.1 billion

October 12, 2010--And on the hundredth day, the California legislature borrowed from Peter (education) to pay Paul (pass a budget). In the tardiest budget in state history, the public schools will be cut \$3.1 billion with \$1.9 billion to be deferred and repaid in 2011-2012. (More on that later).

What does a \$3.1 billion cut look like? For our student leaders at California for Justice, it looks like a computer lab where only eight of thirty computers work. Or a set of class books that students cannot bring home to do homework. Or a counselor you're lucky to see once a year.

More so, what does it feel like? "Like no one cares what happens to us," says Jessica Solano Salazar, a student in the Oakland Unified School District. "I want to go to college and get a good job, but how am I supposed to get there when I don't have any guidance and support?"

And though these cuts to education budget are "across the board," they certainly don't have equal consequences. In California, the racial achievement gap is tied to the Racial Funding Gap. That means these cuts will again disproportionately affect students of color, immigrants students, and low-income students and their access to qualified teachers, college and career prep classes, counselors, arts and music and sports, and open libraries and computer labs.

On the community college side of the budget, approximately \$126 million in funding to cover 26,000 full-time students won't help meet increased demand for community college courses. According to the California Budget Project, this funding would provide support for existing, not additional, students because the community colleges currently are over-enrolled by 89,000 students. This means thousand of students may not be able to enroll in courses and will be stuck in an educational limbo, unable to graduate or transfer.

It's important to note here that students of color make up 66% of California's K-12 students and at least 53% of community college students. That's over 5.5 million students who are supposed to be graduating from high school and college, starting small businesses, inventing new technologies, and basically paying the bills for the next thirty years. If these budget cuts are painful and costly, how do you quantify a whole lost generation, economically (if not morally)?

So what can be done? For one, we cannot cut our way to a balanced, healthy budget. Revenues must be increased. A few bills back in May sought to do so by splitting commercial property taxes off of

Proposition 13, taxing oil companies, but failed to muster the political will to arrive at the Governor's desk.

On our part, Californians for Justice has tried the legislative route and been turned back and vetoed again and again. That's why this past July, Californians for Justice and our allies in the Campaign for Quality Education sued the state of California. *CQE v. CA* is an education funding equity and adequacy suit that demands that California fulfill its constitutional obligation to provide its young people with a quality education. It's not the ideal route of change, but it's our communities' last resort. Equity lawsuits have proven effective from New Jersey to South Carolina to Kentucky.

Lastly, if this education budget looks perilous, it gets worse. It's based on two major assumptions: that California will receive \$5.3 billion in federal relief and revenue will increase \$1.4 billion. If those forecasts don't pan out, what will happen to that \$1.9 billion repayment to the education budget that is supposed to come from next year's budget?

In 2004-05, the last time the state suspended Proposition 98's guaranteed funding for education, we had to sue just to get the money we were owed back. (The state settled and repaid \$5.7 billion.)

Is California really "borrowing" from Peter to pay Paul? Or is it robbing our students' futures and balancing adult responsibilities on our children's backs?