

Fight for California's Future tool kit

Thanks again for getting involved in the Fight for California's Future! You're taking action with thousands of California's who want a brighter future for our great state. Together, we will reclaim the promise of a quality public education for all, rebuild a state government and economy that works for everyone and restore a fair tax system to invest in California's future.

This take action tool kit will provide you with everything you need to build power for change in your community. If after reading it, you still have questions, call (213) 387-0780 or e-mail march@Fight4CAFuture.com.



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Our March

Fight for the California Dream

California is perched on the budgetary brink. We are at a crossroad, and the choices our elected leaders make will determine whether we restore California's promise or watch the American Dream slip away.

Instead of making tough choices, our governor and a minority of legislators think the "solution" is draconian cuts to essential services: our schools, parks, libraries, safety net services and other vital public institutions.

The consequences will haunt our state for a generation. Classrooms will be more crowded and less safe; neighborhoods less clean and more dangerous. Tuitions will skyrocket, turning our community colleges and public universities into distant dreams instead of bridges to the middle class. More families will go bankrupt because they cannot afford health care.

The California Federation of Teachers and a diverse coalition of labor, education, business and faith groups believe that we can't afford to auction off our future. We believe our elected leaders need to return to the core values that made this state great. We must come together to:

- Reclaim the promise of quality public education and services
- Rebuild state government so it works for everyone
- Restore fair and equitable taxes to invest in California's future

We live in the richest state in the richest country in the world. Budget cuts are not inevitable, but the result of political choices. We cannot allow a minority of legislators to enact budgets that destroy rather than build. Rather than showering more tax breaks to the wealthiest corporations and millionaires, elected leaders should invest in our future.

That's why we march. Beginning March 5, we will leave Los Angeles to march from Bakersfield to Sacramento. Along the way we will:

- Register voters
- Hold teach-ins and town hall meetings
- Visit legislators
- Hold rallies to enlist your support.
- Blog, tweet and record the action on the frontlines with live video feeds.
- March on the state capitol on April 21 to make our voices heard.

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Take Action

How you can get involved

1. March for California's Future

Join the march or one of the many rallies we will hold throughout the Central Valley. To join us, go to www.Fight4CAFuture.com and fill out a pledge form. Or e-mail march@Fight4CAFuture.com.

2. Write a letter to the governor

Here is a sample letter below that you can use or personalize as you desire. You can find your state representative and state senator at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html>

Dear _____,

In California, we expect our elected leaders to make the tough decisions necessary to ensure a brighter future for our children. It's what generations of Californians did before us. It's why even in these tough times our great state is an innovator in technology and the engine that drives the U.S. economy.

But the talk in Sacramento by a minority of legislators strays from the core values that made our state great. We believe in fiscal responsibility. But we do not believe in auctioning off our future to balance the budget.

We need to restore California's promise. We want budgets that protect essential services that are keys to our quality of life and building our economy. Budgets that build rather than destroy. Budgets that protect our schools, parks, libraries, safety net services and other vital public institutions.

We ask that you join us to:

- *Reclaim the promise of quality public education and services*
- *Rebuild state government so it works for everyone*
- *Restore fair and equitable taxes to invest in California's future*

Thank You.

3. Write a letter to the editor

Letters to the editor discuss recent stories in a newspaper, magazine, radio station or TV program. They are a chance for the community to chime in on the issues of the day.

Tips:

- Your letter has the best chance of being published if it is a reaction to a story in the paper. Respond as quickly as you can.
- Keep your letter short and concise—150-200 words.
- Write in short paragraphs, with no more than three sentences per paragraph.
- No personal attacks.

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- Put your full name, address and phone number at the top of the page and sign the letter at the bottom. You must include a phone number for verification purposes.
- Follow up to see if the letter was received.
- Write your own letter. Editors will not publish form letters.

4. Add your organization's name to the endorsement list

Our coalition is growing bigger and stronger every day. Join the endorsement list by e-mailing march@Fight4CAFuture.com.

5. Organize for California's Future

For us to succeed, we must build a large and diverse coalition. Only with your help can we build that coalition.

Help organize for California's Future by encouraging friends, family, neighbors, co-workers and community members to: join the march; write letters to the legislature; write letters to the editor; and donate to the campaign.

Here are some groups to reach out to in your community:

- Local labor unions
- Faith-based groups and clergy
- Asian, African, Latin American solidarity groups
- Police officers and firemen
- Parents, teachers, and children
- High school youth groups and university student groups
- Community groups, peace and social justice committees, and human rights organizations
- Public health groups, environmental groups
- Small progressive businesses

6. Throw a house party or host an event

Your Restore the California Dream house party won't be all that different from hosting any other party. You'll need to make sure you have plenty of munchies and refreshments.

Step 1: Register

Be sure to e-mail us at march@Fight4CAFuture.com so we can provide guidance. We also enables us to keep tabs on what's going on and where and how many groups have signed up, as well as how effective the particular action is.

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Step 2: Making Your Agenda

The campaign needs help in many different areas. You could raise funds, write letters to the editor, write letters to the governor or strategize how to recruit friends to participate in the march. Create a clear goal from what you'd like to achieve from your event.

Consider what you will say before you begin the party. Be sure to consult the fact sheet included in this toolkit, and to read up the latest news and events on www.Fight4CAFuture.com

Step 3: Planning Your Event

There are many questions to consider. Where will they park? Should you have a greeter at the door? Do you need to buzz them in? Is your address clearly marked and your house easy to find?

Are you going to use paper plates and cups? Do you have extra serving utensils? Do you want some folks to bring drinks or ice?

Do you have enough chairs for your guests?

Step 4: The Invitations

Be sure to invite folks from work, church, your union, neighbors, family and others. You can also use social media such as Facebook to get the word out.

Use the attached invitations and sign in sheet for the party. It is also a good idea to send a press release to attract media attention to help us with the campaign. Contact us and we can help you with that.

Today there are more ways of getting the word out than ever. Don't depend on one exclusively. And remember, people threw successful parties before e-mail existed.

- Send an e-mail to all invitees. Make sure you mention why you are hosting the party, for example, "we want to restore a quality public education for all Californians." And don't forget to include pertinent information, obvious things like your address, phone number and e-mail address. Consider using free programs, such as E-Vite (wwwE-Vite.com), which sends out invitations, then tracks responses and sends out reminders automatically.
- Snail mail: Same rules apply. Use the attached invitation.
- Post a flier: Church and union hall bulletin boards, Starbucks community pin-up board, or tack it up to a telephone pole.
- Phone: More personal than any other method, phone calls can be extremely effective. So work those phones!

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- Follow Up: Send out a reminder. You can easily do this via e-mail if it's a collective party date push - "Only 10 more days until the Fight for California's Future party."

Step 5: Checklist

- Pens and paper: Be sure you have enough, including paper for note taking.
- Postage stamps
- Nametags (optional)
- Campaign fliers (see attached)
- Food. You can prepare it yourself or ask participants to bring some with them.
- Document the event. Assign someone to take pictures.

Step 6: During the Party

Here is how the evening might look.

- Guests begin to arrive: welcome them, serve refreshments and mingle.
- Introductions: When it looks like everyone has pretty much arrived, introduce yourself formally and talk about the campaign and the specific reason for the gathering.
- Discussion: Take a few minutes to talk about the budget crisis. Consider making news articles on Fight4CAFuture.com already printed out and available to read.
- Action: Hand out the pens, paper and stamps!
- Wrap up: Thank your guests and guest speaker (if you had one) buttonhole guests who are willing to get more involved and encourage donations.

Step 7: After the Party

You know what a house can look like after a party. Make sure a few folks from your own group stick around to help with the cleanup.

- **Get back to us:** Contact us to let us know how it went.
- **Thank yous:** It's always a nice touch to write thank you notes. Be sure to talk up the March Web site and encourage them to stay involved.

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Take Action

Arm yourself with the facts

Before reaching out to family, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other community members, you should educate yourself on the issues. Here is a helpful summary.

- The governor and a minority of legislators are seeking \$20 billion in budget cuts to schools, parks, libraries, safety net services and other services. These cuts threaten California's long-term prosperity and are a departure from the core values that made California the engine that drives America's economy.
- The March for California's Future is about reclaiming California's promise and defending the American dream. We must restore quality public education and public services for every Californian, a government and economy that serves us all and a fair tax system to fund California's future.
- These cuts are not one year, temporary cuts. Their impact will haunt California for a generation.
 - School children do not get to retake the third grade even if their classroom was too crowded and unruly for them to learn.
 - Families who file for bankruptcy because they can't afford their child's medical bills do not get their life savings back.
 - The pain of seeing a disabled loved one forced into a state institution never goes away.
 - Crime victims hurt by convicted felons released from prison too soon do not become unvictimized.
- Contrary to claims by the governor, California does not have a spending problem. California has the third fewest state employees in the nation in proportion to its population. It actually ranks near the bottom in education and social spending per capita.
- It should come as no surprise that only Mississippi eighth graders read at a lower level than California eighth graders.
- The cuts being enacted across the state don't remove waste or inefficiency. They cut into basic core services we all depend on, rich and poor alike. In Sacramento, the municipal fire department is mothballing fire trucks. The governor is considering releasing 20,000 convicted felons into our communities.
- We depend on government to keep us safe. We should close tax loopholes for the wealthy, not fire stations.

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- This fiscal crisis is the direct result for political decisions made in Sacramento the past 15 years. We could solve this crisis by simply repealing tax breaks for the wealthy and tax loopholes written for special interests and large corporations.
 - Just last year, the legislature passed more than \$2 billion in corporate giveaways in the midst of one of the worst fiscal crisis since the Great Depression.
 - Returning the very top tax brackets to 1991 levels for those making more than \$250,000 and \$500,000 a year could raise \$4-6 billion alone.
 - Re-assessing the values of non-residential real estate would raise \$3 billion. The inequalities of the current tax system allow Disneyland to pay a nickel per square foot in property tax while the typical family is paying \$2 a square foot for their home. We should end this inequity.
 - California is the only oil producing state that does not have a severance tax for oil drilled in the state. We could raise \$1.5 billion by ending this giveaway to Big Oil. Claims that it will stifle production are ludicrous. Alaska has the highest oil severance tax in the nation and is the top oil producing state in the country.
- Despite the common myth that California is anti-business, it still attracts more venture capital than any state. California is a leader in technology, fashion, entertainment and agriculture. We have the eighth largest economy in the world. The American Dream was practically invented in California. We accomplished that by building a world class education system. But that system has fallen into disrepair, and the budget cuts the governor is pushing will only make it worse.
- Given that California is one of the richest states in the richest country in the world, it is unconscionable to auction off our childrens' future so we can maintain tax breaks for millionaires and large corporations. We should not balance the budget on the backs of our school children, the poor, elderly, disabled and working families while not asking for an ounce of sacrifice from those who can most afford it.
- Many media outlets repeatedly report the claim that California has a highly progressive tax code. The idea that California soaks the rich has no truth in reality. In fact, studies have shown that California actually has a regressive tax code that taxes the poor at much higher rates. The typical taxpayer making less than \$22,000 a year pays about 10.2 percent in combined state and local taxes; the wealthiest 1 percent, who make more than \$600,000 a year, typically only pay 7.4 percent, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.
- The fiscal crisis in Sacramento is the result of a dysfunctional system that allows a mere one-third of legislators to claim victory and block budgets with overwhelming bipartisan support. In a true democracy, the idea that gets the most votes wins. Californians overwhelmingly elect progressives but in practice Sacramento governs

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like a red state. The current system is a subversion of democracy and the will of the people.

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