

## Dennis Ancinec

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**From:** Jim Mahler [aftjim@pacbell.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 12, 2009 5:07 PM  
**To:** AFT General Distribution  
**Subject:** A message from CFT President Hittelman



February 12, 2009

Dear Jim,

**Contact your legislators. Ask them to vote "No" on this budget.**

**Why a state budget requires public democracy, not a cone of silence**  
*from CFT President Marty Hittelman*

The Legislature and governor are on the verge of agreeing to a state budget that would not be in the best interest of most Californians. It would greatly harm public education, public health programs, and working people. It continues the financially disastrous tradition of reducing targeted taxes and creating new tax loopholes each year in order to convince Republican legislators to vote for the budget, a consequence of the state's dysfunctional two-thirds legislative supermajority requirement. The "budget" bills also strip hard-won rights from working people that have nothing to do with a state budget, in order to satisfy a particular group of businesses.

The proposed reductions in education programs amount to more than \$5 billion this year and \$3 billion next year. This will continue to hamper our educators' ability to deliver the best education we can to the state's six million K-12 students and 2 million community college students. The CFT believes that education should be seen as an investment in California's future, not as a target for budget cuts. Students' progress will be slowed if the increased class sizes incorporated into this budget occur. In addition, the bill seeks to rewrite the guarantees of Proposition 98 to K-14 education without a vote of the people. This is clearly contrary to state law.

In creating so-called "flexibility" for school district and college administrations to move funds out of categorical programs and into district general funds, the Legislature and governor do not solve the problem of our under funded educational system. Instead, this provides a tool for administrators to eliminate class size reduction (CSR), adult education, occupational skills, early childhood education, professional development, part-time parity pay and other necessary programs.

Most of these programs are directed at the needs of disadvantaged and working class students. Eliminating these programs along with cutting Prop 98 is only taking California backwards. There must be an evaluation of specific categorical programs and a discussion of flexibility at the policy level. This decision should not be made solely for financial reasons.

We are opposed to the spending cap included in this budget. This spending cap creates a ceiling on

future spending at a time when the economy is at an historic low. Under this spending cap, no improvements in any public services or public works infrastructure will be possible in the future, no matter how much the economy grows or how vital the need. The cap provisions also allow the Governor to make unilateral budget cuts without legislative approval—a direct assault on the balance between the Legislative and the Administrative branches of state government.

The proposed "single sales factor" tax provision is a loophole worth over \$750 million per year and will only help corporations avoid paying their fair share of taxes. This bit of chicanery comes on top of an accumulation of more than twelve billion dollars per year in lost revenue to the state of California over the past fifteen years. Each year, in order to convince enough members of the minority Republican Party to reach a two thirds vote for a budget, Democrats have agreed to tax cuts and new tax loopholes, mostly for the wealthy and corporations. Added together, these cuts amount to more than the current state budget deficit. During these extraordinary budget times, when education, our universities, health and human services are facing such deep cuts, this enormous tax giveaway is unconscionable.


Finally, the budget is no place to be eliminating hard won labor rights. Issues such as state holidays and overtime provisions for state workers should be bargained, not taken away in attempt to appease business interests. We are opposed to negotiating policy issues that have no relevance to the budget process.

The problems we see in this budget bill could have been addressed if there had been full and open hearings instead of secret legislative leadership discussions under a "cone of silence" with the governor. The CFT believes that government functions best and in the interests of the most people when it is conducted in public, not behind closed doors. It also functions best when, as in virtually every other state, it is run on the basic democratic principle of majority rule. Unfortunately, that is not the practice today in California.

In short, we are disappointed with the work of the legislative leadership, and urge all legislators to vote "No" on the budget package, and to tell their leaders and the governor to go back and do it right—and in public.

**Contact your legislators. Ask them to vote "No" on this budget.**

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