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Next 10 Releases 2011 California Budget Challenge

As State Legislators consider Governor Brown's Budget Proposal, Nonprofit Nonpartisan Group Releases Latest Online Budget Simulation

San Francisco, CA –Last month, Governor Brown proposed a budget that includes both extensions to temporary tax increases and cuts to nearly every state program to balance a staggering \$25.4 billion deficit. As the state legislature grapples with these proposals, Californians can try their hand at reducing our state's budget gap—their way. Today Next 10 released the 2011 version of the nonpartisan [California Budget Challenge](#), an online tool that lets users understand the serious choices facing our state and see where they stand on a series of spending and revenue policy options. They can create a budget that reflects their values and share it with their elected representatives and colleagues.

"Californians are talking about the issues presented in the latest budget proposal by Governor Brown, but few understand the specifics that will have a very real impact on their lives," said F. Noel Perry, founder of Next 10. "The California Budget Challenge provides people outside of the formal policymaking process with a way to learn about and work through the major choices being discussed in Sacramento."

The California Budget Challenge includes the most up-to-date figures from the independent Legislative Analyst's Office and Governor Brown's January budget proposal. Users are presented with many of the current proposals under consideration by the legislature. In addition to choices about education spending and income tax, the updated Budget Challenge offers the opportunity to weigh in on topical proposals such as changes to pensions, redevelopment, and realigning state and local government responsibilities.

"The California Budget Challenge gives citizens a unique opportunity to see how all of the major pieces fit together and the trade-offs inherent in putting together a balanced budget for our state," stated Michael Genest, former Director of Finance for Governor Schwarzenegger.

Since its debut in 2005, more than 250,000 people have used the California Budget Challenge. The online budget simulation guides users through a series of decisions on issues ranging from education funding to taxes and more. With each choice, a graph displays how those decisions affect the budget deficit five years into the future as well as arguments for and against each choice.

“Many have called this the year of ‘fiscal reckoning,’” said Tim Gage, former Director of Finance for Governor Davis. “Our state has run out of short-term solutions and needs to make long-term decisions about spending and revenues to close the \$25.4 billion deficit. It’s more important than ever that Californians have a better understanding of our fiscal choices.”

In the 2011 California Budget Challenge, users have new policy options to consider including:

- Realignment,
- Spending cuts to Community Colleges,
- Redevelopment,
- Pensions,
- Cap & Trade program; and
- Additional spending cuts and revenue options.

Updated policy options also include:

- Spending on K-12 programs and UC/CSU systems,
- Health and human service programs,
- Retiree health benefits,
- Vehicle License Fee; and
- Adjustments to the state’s income tax, sales tax, corporation tax, and property tax levels.

After completing their budget plan, users can email their budget to legislators letting them know their priorities for solving California’s fiscal crisis.

“It is critically important that lawmakers hear the priorities of Californians across the state,” added Perry. “We make it very easy for users to send the budgets they create along with comments directly to their representatives, so in one click they can let lawmakers know what issues are most important to them and their families.”

In addition to its online presence, Next 10 also takes the interactive California Budget Challenge on the road, to legislative town halls, classrooms, business and civic organizations, interacting with diverse communities throughout California. Next 10 also offers a quick Daily Budget Quiz

on their website at www.next10.org that provides visitors with “bite-sized” information that gives context to the budget decisions and issues at stake. This nonpartisan education tool is designed as a widget and is available to embed on other websites and blogs.

To take the California Budget Challenge visit www.budgetchallenge.org, or learn more about Next 10 at www.next10.org.

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About Next 10: Next 10 is an independent, nonpartisan organization that educates, engages and empowers Californians to improve the state’s future. Next 10 is focused on innovation and the intersection between the economy, the environment, and quality of life issues for all Californians.