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Former CA Directors of Finance from Opposite Sides of the Aisle Update 2010 “California Budget Challenge”

Budget Gurus Tim Gage and Mike Genest Collaborate with Next 10 to Give Californians a Chance to Try their Hands at Solving the State Budget Crisis

Sacramento, CA – As directors of finance for Governors Davis and Schwarzenegger, Tim Gage and Mike Genest managed California’s balance sheets, crafting state budgets topping \$100 billion. Now these former budget gurus from opposite sides of the aisle are helping everyday Californians experience what it’s like to hold the Golden State’s purse strings. Today Next 10 debuted the 2010 “[California Budget Challenge](#),” a nonpartisan online game that lets users try their hand at solving the state fiscal crisis by creating a budget reflecting their values. This year, Next 10 collaborated with Gage and Genest to provide users with the tough choices and tradeoffs faced by legislators today.

“With a combined eight years of experience developing the state budget, few people know the ins and outs of California’s finances like Mike and Tim,” said Noel Perry, founder of Next 10. “The 2010 Budget Challenge is informed by their expertise and gives users a real sense of the decisions made in building a budget for our state.”

Both Gage and Genest bring deep knowledge of California finances to the “California Budget Challenge.” Genest served four years as Director of the California Department of Finance, having been appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2005. Prior to that post, Genest held positions as Director of the California Senate Republican Fiscal Office and Deputy Director for Welfare Programs in the Department of Social Services, following a ten-year career in the Legislative Analyst’s Office. Genest received his master's degree from the University of California at Berkeley, Graduate School of Public Policy in 1980.

Tim Gage spent 24 years as a fiscal advisor with both houses of the California Legislature and as the Director of the California Department of Finance. Governor Gray Davis appointed Gage to that post in 1999 where he served through 2003. Gage received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy with honors from Harvard College and a Master of Public Policy degree from the

Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley.

“While our views on fiscal policy may diverge, we’re in total agreement on one point,” said Gage. “It is critical that Californians learn about the financial challenges facing our state.”

“California’s legislators are tasked with balancing the budget, but they are ultimately responsible to the people,” added Genest.” A well-informed populace can help to hold our legislators accountable. The ‘California Budget Challenge’ is a fun and nonpartisan way for Californians to gain a deeper understanding of the budgetary process.”

Since its creation in 2005, over 150,000 people have used the “California Budget Challenge.” The online game guides users through a series of decisions on issues ranging from education funding to taxes and more. The statistics and proposals featured reflect those currently in consideration by the state government. With each choice, a graph displays how those decisions impact the budget deficit 5 years into the future as well as arguments for and against each option. At the conclusion of each session, users have the opportunity to send their budget directly to legislators and let lawmakers know how they would like to see the state run.

In addition to its online presence, Next 10 also takes the interactive “Budget Challenge” on the road, visiting classrooms, businesses, and diverse communities throughout California. The “Budget Challenge” has even been used by legislators to solicit counsel from their constituents on legislative decisions.

In the coming weeks, Next 10 will hold live sessions with the 2010 “California Budget Challenge” in Sacramento, Carmel, Santa Clara, and San Francisco. For more information on these events, or an up-to-date list of upcoming live sessions, contact the number above. To take the “California Budget Challenge” or learn more about Next 10, visit www.budgetchallenge.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.