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New Nonpartisan Group Challenges 10,000 Californians to Create Their Own State Budget by May 5

Next Ten Launches “California Budget Challenge,” Says Future of State Depends on Public Engagement, Commitment to Long-term Vision

SACRAMENTO, CA – Next Ten, a new, independent organization, today announced an unprecedented statewide effort to engage and inform everyday Californians on the impact of state budget decisions. Next Ten launched the “California Budget Challenge” (www.next-ten.org) an interactive, online experience that lets Californians make their own choices about how to spend and raise state funds as they create a ten year budget. The organization has set a goal of having 10,000 Californians create their own ten-year budgets in by May 5, 2005.

“Everything from our future ability to buy a home, afford health care, provide our children with a world-class education and keep breathing clean air is tied to state budget decisions we make today,” said Noel Perry, founder of Next Ten. “We created the California Budget Challenge as a public service to engage more Californians in the budget process. We want all Californians to understand the tough choices we must make to ensure California is a great place to live now and in the future.”

Next Ten is inviting Californians to create their own state budget for the next 10 years at www.next-ten.org. Each user can call the shots on how much to give to schools, health care, prisons and other state programs. Then users make choices about how to pay for these programs. The Challenge crunches the numbers and lets the user know whether they’ve balanced the budget over the next ten years. It is the most comprehensive online budget tool ever created to engage and educate Californians about the long-term implications of state spending and revenue decisions.

“California was built by visionary pioneers who wanted a better life for themselves and their families,” said Carol Whiteside, President of the Great Valley Center. “California’s unique ability to think big and plan for the future now needs to be applied to tackling our budget challenges so we can rebuild the California dream.”

The California Budget Challenge Web site also features an interactive link where users can share their opinions about the budget with other Californians. The Challenge was created in consultation with Stephen Levy, one of the most respected economists in the

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state, and the director and senior economist of the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy in Palo Alto.

“The California Budget Challenge is an innovative, hands-on way to engage Californians about the budget,” said Leon Panetta, a senior advisor to Next Ten and director of the Panetta Institute at California State University, Monterey Bay. “We believe that a well-informed, engaged public can work together to break gridlock, rebuild trust in government and rebuild the California dream.”

About Next Ten: Next Ten is a new independent, nonpartisan organization whose aim is to engage and educate Californians so that, together, we can improve our future economy and quality of life. For more information, visit www.next-ten.org

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