

SENATORS HANCOCK AND CORBETT HOST INTERACTIVE BUDGET FORUM WITH VOTER EDUCATION GROUP NEXT 10 TO SOLVE STATE FISCAL CRISIS

SIMULATION CHALLENGES STUDENTS TO BALANCE STATE BUDGET

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Berkeley, CA – Senator Loni Hancock (9th District) and Senator Ellen Corbett (10th District) hosted an interactive budget forum, providing participants with an opportunity to learn about California’s budget process and attempt to solve the state budget crisis.

Using the California Budget Challenge simulation (www.budgetchallenge.org), developed by Next 10, a non-partisan voter education group, participants were presented with different scenarios about the state budget and experienced the tough choices and tradeoffs faced by legislators today. It guided participants through a series of issues such as education, health services, transportation, and more. The audience made policy choices with handheld instant response “clickers” and the results were aggregated immediately. Once decisions were made, a graph displayed how those decisions will impact the budget deficit 5 years into the future as well as arguments for and against each option.

“California’s higher education system is hurting and everyone is feeling the pain. We’re all in this together,” said Senator Loni Hancock (D-Oakland). “We have to stop disinvesting in higher education and we need to preserve, protect, and adequately support the public structures that have taken us decades to build. We have a responsibility to continue providing an education system that prepares young people for the future.”

“The Next 10 challenge is a great hands-on opportunity for people to understand the complexities of the budget,” said Senator Ellen M. Corbett (D-San Leandro). “It is a learning opportunity to understand what it takes to balance the budget, especially in light of the requirement to get a two-thirds vote.”

Following the interactive “Budget Challenge” activity, students representing UC, CSU, and community colleges discussed the overall results and addressed key issues in dealing with the state budget and funding higher education.

“The budget cuts have had a tremendous, day-to-day impact on students and families in higher education, from the significant increase in fees to reduced class and education services, said Jesse Cheng, Student Regent 2010-2011. “While many student leaders have been working on these issues for years, every student must learn and become active in the budget decision-making process.”