

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 23, 2008

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As Budget Stalemate Wears on-- Voters Can Set Their Own Priorities

Next 10 Launches Updated "California Budget Challenge"

Sacramento—As the budget stalemate wears on, the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization Next 10 is releasing a newly updated version of the California Budget Challenge today so that voters can try their hand at dealing with the tradeoffs required in striking a budget deal. The newly re-released 2008 Budget Challenge, an online interactive educational game, contains updated projections of budget deficits as well as updated policy choices in the areas of education, health care, and the environment.

“Right now, Democratic leaders are calling for tax increases to close the budget gap, while the Republicans are calling for spending cuts. We want voters to understand the costs and benefits associated with taking either route or some type of compromise,” said F. Noel Perry, the founder of Next 10.

The Budget Challenge permits users to examine the State’s most pressing budget policy choices. It asks users to set priorities for the next five years by building a budget that reflects their values and vision for California’s future. Users who log onto the updated Challenge will find 15 policy questions (8 spending questions and 7 revenue questions) they must answer in order to build a complete budget. A few of the new policy options include (but are not limited to):

- A proposal to increase income taxes for upper-middle and upper income earners by \$5.1 billion.
- A proposal to cut healthcare spending by tightening eligibility for state-run health services, cutting \$1.3 billion from the budget.
- A proposal to release non-violent, non-serious, non-sex offenders without prior serious or violent offenses 20 months early cutting \$700 million from the budget by 2012-2013.
- A \$200 million dollar spending proposal would fund university-level research of renewable energy technologies. An alternative \$500 million dollar proposal would fund energy efficiency measures.

The interactive features of the online Budget Challenge ensure that users not only educate

themselves but also engage the budget process. The game gives users the option to email state leaders feedback about the policies they believe are important to the state's future.

“We would like to see Californians engaged in the budget. They should influence the process because these policies have a profound impact on our everyday lives. Decisions being made in Sacramento determine everything from who gets healthcare, to who is able to go to college, and how much we pay in taxes,” said Noel Perry.

In order to get Californians involved in the budget process through the online 2008 Budget Challenge, Next 10 is now distributing newly updated educational budget brochures to libraries, schools, colleges, and nonpartisan civic organizations across the state. Since its launch in 2005, more than 50,000 Californians have taken the Challenge at www.Next10.org.

About Next 10: Next 10 is an independent, nonpartisan organization that educates, engages, and empowers Californians to improve the state's future. Recognizing the complexity of issues confronting California today, Next 10 is focused on improving the state over the next ten years, and the ten years after that. Next 10 was founded by F. Noel Perry, a venture capitalist and philanthropist concerned about California today and the California our children will inherit. www.Next10.org

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