



CALIFORNIA'S  
COALITION  
*for* ADEQUATE  
SCHOOL HOUSING<sup>SM</sup>



Jim Murdoch, one of the original founders of C.A.S.H., was fond of quoting the late Senator Leroy F. Greene: "Buildings can't speak for themselves...so we must speak for them." The Coalition for Adequate School Housing was formed in 1978 in the wake of Proposition 13 to advocate and provide a voice for adequate school facilities for all of California's public school students. C.A.S.H. has been a strong advocate for school facility funding, and has supported every statewide school facility bond initiative since 1982. C.A.S.H.'s school district membership represents 93% of California's students, as well as a diverse private sector membership, and has been the "voice" for school facilities in California for the past 37 years.

At present, the school facility community finds itself in a time of transition. A statewide school bond has not been on the ballot since 2006, and School Facility Program (SFP) bond authority has been exhausted. Of particular concern to C.A.S.H., the Governor has posed a critical question: What is the role of the State, if any, in funding future school facilities? In 2014, C.A.S.H. advocated for a statewide school bond and a continued state role in school facilities on all fronts. We conducted polling which showed public support for a school bond, and we developed and led a strong coalition in support of the 2014 bond bill AB 2235 (Buchanan/Hagman). C.A.S.H. also worked with our partners on an extensive media campaign to urge the support of the Governor and lawmakers. Although AB 2235 received zero "NO" votes in the Legislature, at the end of the Legislative Session the Governor signaled that he would not sign the bill.

### **Californians for Quality Schools**

C.A.S.H. is committed to retaining the successful existing funding partnership between state and local entities, which requires the State to keep its end of the bargain. Having exhausted the traditional avenues, however, it has become clear that if the school facilities community continues only along the legislative path, school facilities will continue to lose ground.

For this reason, on Monday, January 12th the Coalition for Adequate School Housing formed the Californians for Quality Schools committee, which filed ballot initiative language with the State's Attorney General's Office to place a \$9 billion K-14 school bond on the November 2016 ballot. This action bypasses the Legislature and Governor and goes directly to the people of California. If the initiative is qualified, placed on the ballot, and approved by voters, it will provide \$9 billion in bonding authority to fund new construction, modernization, career technical education, charter school facilities, and community colleges. C.A.S.H.'s polling shows that a strong majority of California voters are willing to make an investment in school facilities.

The Californians for Quality Schools initiative maintains the state role in funding school facilities by retaining the successful current funding partnership between state and local entities. The initiative language does not propose new programmatic changes, such as the ones proposed by the Governor, or other proposals developed by entities such as the State Allocation Board (SAB) School Facility Program Review Subcommittee. The following is the funding schedule in the initiative:

- New Construction                    \$3 Billion
- Modernization                        \$3 Billion
- Career Technical Education       \$500 Million
- Charter School Facilities            \$500 Million
- Community Colleges                 \$2 Billion



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Concerning the timing of the initiative, the following is a summary of important milestones in 2015 beginning with the filing of the initiative on January 12, 2015:

Day 1 - Submit initiative to the Attorney General

Day 30 - Public comment period ends

Day 50 - Department of Finance and Legislative Analyst's Office fiscal analysis due

Day 60 - Attorney General's "Title and Summary" due

Up to Day 240 - Signature gathering must be completed. Signature gathering begins after the Attorney General's Title and Summary are complete (by day 60), and may continue for 180 days. Signatures are then reviewed to determine if the initiative qualifies for the ballot.

### **Governor's 2015-16 State Budget**

On January 9, 2015, Governor Jerry Brown released his proposed 2015-16 State Budget, which includes a proposal for a new facilities program with a significantly reduced state role, and no state school bond or state funding for the current pipeline. The proposed budget states that the Administration, "...is prepared to engage with the Legislature and education stakeholders to shape a future state program that is focused on districts with the greatest need, while providing substantial new flexibility for local districts to raise the necessary resources for school facilities needs." In essence, the Governor is suggesting that conversations with stakeholders and the Legislature should continue regarding the future of facilities funding. While details are far from fleshed out, the general themes of the Governor's locally-funded school facility proposal are "Local Flexibility" and "Safety Net." The Governor's proposal includes recommendations to address both objectives, including expanding local funding capacity, restructuring developer fees, expanding the use of the Routine Restricted Maintenance Account (RRMA), targeting state funding to districts with low assessed valuation or overcrowding, and augmenting the Charter School Facility Grant Program eligibility criteria.

The issue of a future facilities program is currently being pursued on two tracks: the C.A.S.H.-sponsored initiative track, and the legislative/Administrative track. Senator Carol Liu, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, has introduced her own bond bill, SB 114, which will serve as a vehicle for ongoing discussion in the Legislature about the future of facilities funding. C.A.S.H. is strongly committed to ensuring that there is a statewide school bond in 2016, so we will continue to engage in the legislative process while fully supporting our initiative. I believe it is paramount we keep our eyes on the prize. In the end, if there is no funding, there is no program.

Finally, the C.A.S.H. Board believes that every child deserves access to safe, secure, modern learning environments, and I believe that the Californians for Quality Schools initiative will achieve this objective. C.A.S.H. is committed to running the school facilities flag up the hill, and with your help, we know we will be successful. To find out more about the initiative, please visit the CASH Issues Committee website at <http://www.cashissuesstateschoolbond.com/>

*~Joe Dixon, Californians for Quality Schools Chair*