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California School Spending Continues March to the Bottom, New Study Shows

On a Per-Student Basis, California's Spending Lags Rest of the US by Widest Gap in Four Decades

SACRAMENTO, CA – California has fallen further behind the rest of the United States with respect to spending on K-12 education over the past decade and now ranks near the bottom on several key measures, according to a new analysis from the California Budget Project.

A Decade of Disinvestment: California Education Spending Nears the Bottom finds that California schools spent \$2,856 less per student than the rest of US in 2010-11 (\$8,908 compared with \$11,764) and ranks 46th – four spots from the bottom – on per-student spending. The gap between California and the rest of the nation represents more than a fourfold increase from the \$691 gap in 2001-02 and is at its widest point in the past four decades.

"Supporting our public schools provides the key to creating opportunity for young people and making sure California has the skilled workforce needed in an increasingly competitive global economy," said Jonathan Kaplan, senior policy analyst at the CBP and author of the report. "California's chronic budget problems have taken a toll on funding for education and other core public services that promote the well-being of youth and families."

Drawing on the latest available data, *A Decade of Disinvestment* highlights various facets of California's education spending gap. The report finds that:

- In addition to ranking 46th in per-student spending, California ranks in the bottom five states on other key measures, such as the number of K-12 students per teacher (ranked 50th) and K-12 spending as a share of the state's economy (ranked 47th).
- Measured as a share of the state's economy, the gap in school spending between California and the rest of the US has increased more than fivefold over the past decade. In 2001-02, California's school spending was 3.90 percent of the state's total personal income, compared with 4.09 percent in the rest of the US – a gap of 0.19 percentage points. By 2010-11, this gap had widened to 1.02 percentage points, with California's school spending at 3.27 percent of total personal income compared with 4.29 percent in the rest of the US
- The number of students per teacher in California's K-12 schools is almost one-half larger (48.7 percent) than in the rest of the nation. In 2010-11, California averaged 20.5 students per teacher, compared with 13.8 students per teacher in the rest of the US.

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"The widening gap between school spending in California and the rest of the nation means that we are falling behind in preparing our children for the future," said Jean Ross, executive director of the CBP. "California's deteriorating investment in our public schools documents the need for a balanced approach that includes new revenues to help close future budget gaps."

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The California Budget Project (CBP) engages in independent fiscal and policy analysis and public education with the goal of improving public policies affecting the economic and social well-being of low- and middle-income Californians. Support for the CBP comes from foundation grants, subscriptions, and individual contributions. Please visit the CBP's website at www.cbp.org.