



December 21, 2009

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Darrell Steinberg
President Pro Tempore
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Karen Bass
Speaker of the Assembly
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dennis Hollingsworth
Senate Republican Leader
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 305
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Sam Blakeslee
Assembly Republican Leader
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 3104
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger, Senate and Assembly Leaders:

As the mayors of the state's most populous cities, we know that positive education reform is essential to strengthening our communities and economies. However, we also know that the status-quo has been failing our students for too many years.

With Race to the Top, the Obama Administration and U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan have set aside \$4.3 billion to distribute to states that put forth competitive applications for real education reform. If highly competitive, California can secure up to \$700 million in federal Race to the Top funding for California's schools. We respectfully urge you to act immediately by passing comprehensive legislative package to ensure that California's application for Race to the Top funding is as competitive as possible.

Race to the Top represents a much needed paradigm shift in education reform towards real systemic change. As local leaders, we know that we do not need another bureaucratic state program that will be layered on top of the already burdensome programs that currently exist for our districts. The state plan for Race to the Top will instead ensure an effective partnership between our local education agencies and the state, which will give our local school districts the flexibility to create real change in

a way that works best for our communities. With this local empowerment, we can truly create lasting change in all of our schools and improve academic achievement for all of our students.

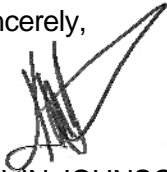
The state must pass comprehensive legislation to ensure that California is not only eligible, but highly competitive for Race to the Top. To make California's application truly competitive, this legislation should include the following key elements:

- A strong plan for turning around the bottom five percent of California's persistently lowest-achieving schools, including charter schools, that empowers parents by allowing them to petition for a school to be turned around.
- The removal of the cap on the number of charter schools authorized to operate in California and the establishment of two working groups to ensure that California has high-quality charter schools that are truly accountable.
- Open enrollment options for students stuck in schools that are identified as low-achieving, which are defined to be those in program improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, and also ranked in deciles one to three, consistent with existing federal law.

Even in tough economic times, our parents and students are counting on us to deliver an education system that improves academic achievement and raises the bar on student success. Race to the Top is our opportunity to do just that. With the January 19, 2010 state application deadline looming, each day that goes by is one less day we have to make California's application as competitive as possible.

By acting immediately to pass comprehensive legislation, California's application for Race to the Top funding can be competitive and provide the tools needed to ensure every student is prepared to enter the workforce or for higher education.

Sincerely,



KEVIN JOHNSON
Mayor – Sacramento



ANTONIO VILLARAIGOSA
Mayor – Los Angeles



JERRY SANDERS
Mayor – San Diego



CHUCK REED
Mayor – San Jose



CURT PRINGLE
Mayor – Anaheim



ASHLEY SWEARINGEN
Mayor – Fresno



MIGUEL PULIDO
Mayor – Santa Ana



GAVIN NEWSOM
Mayor – San Francisco



BOB FOSTER
Mayor – Long Beach