

THERE'S A VAMPIRE SUCKING THE LIFE BLOOD OUT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES IN CALIFORNIA



Frustrated because you
can't get into classes?

Worried about college fees
going up and the job
market going down?

Read on...

California faces an unprecedented \$26 billion deficit. In February and July 2009, Governor Schwarzenegger and the California Legislature made the deepest cuts ever in public services, piled on top of cuts from previous years.

EDUCATION

- **K-12 public schools** cut by 5.3 billion
- **Community colleges cut by 800 million**, student fees up 30%, 250,000 students to be turned away this year
- **The Cal State University system and UC together cut by 2 billion.** At the CSU hundreds of lecturers are laid off, 47,000 employees are furloughed, student fees up 32%, 40,000 qualified students to be turned away in the next two years; a similar situation in the UC system

Says an official of the American Council on Education: "In the 30 years I've been watching higher education policy, I've never seen a state implement budget cuts of this size and scope."

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- **Medi-Cal and Healthy Families**—health insurance for low-income children—is cut more than two billion: 500,000 children will lose their insurance
- **In-Home Support Services for the elderly, blind and disabled** lost 90.5 million, many people in wheel chairs will be sent to costly nursing homes
- **Single mothers on welfare**, \$510M
- **HIV Testing and HIV/AIDS Services**, \$52M
- **Support for families with disabled babies**, \$50M
- **Child Welfare**, \$80M
- **Domestic violence**, \$16.3M, eliminating the program—and on and on

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING NOW?

It's not the fault of the professor who has no room in the class you need.

It's not that California has been "on a spending spree"—spending increases only reflect population growth and inflation.

It's not mothers on welfare or home health aides "taking advantage of the system," to quote Gov. Schwarzenegger's scapegoating remarks.

It's not even the current economic downturn. Though that is a contributing factor, the budget problem began years before the current recession.

Budget deficits in 44 states are the result of a 30-year political strategy called "starve the beast," a term coined by the Reagan administration. The so-called "beast" is government and its programs—public education, Medicare, Social Security, etc. President Reagan's budget chief advocated for "strategic deficits."

Step one: empty the treasury by cutting taxes on corporations and the rich.

Step two: announce that "programs must be cut," making it seem that the now-empty treasury is an act of God or nature—a kind of "El Niño" that just happens.

The main cause of the budget crisis is that tax revenues are way down after three decades of slashing taxes on corporations and rich individuals. Instead taxes have been shifted to middle class, working class and low-income people:

- In 1978 California's Proposition 13 rolled back and froze property taxes in California, leading to a 57% drop in tax revenues each year. It was sold to the voters as a way of keeping little old ladies in their houses, but the main winners were big corporations getting major new tax loopholes.
- California is the only place in the world that does not tax oil as it's drilled. Oil companies such as Chevron spent 100 million dollars to defeat the most recent initiative for an oil tax in 2006.
- Even during the most recent budget crisis, the Legislature actually voted in new tax giveaways to the largest .0001% of corporations in California, costing the public \$2.5 billion a year.
- At the national level, the Bush tax cuts for the richest one percent reduced their taxes by nearly \$200 billion in only two years. Had that money been directed to state fiscal aid, it could have prevented virtually all recent tax hikes and service cuts at the state level—countrywide.

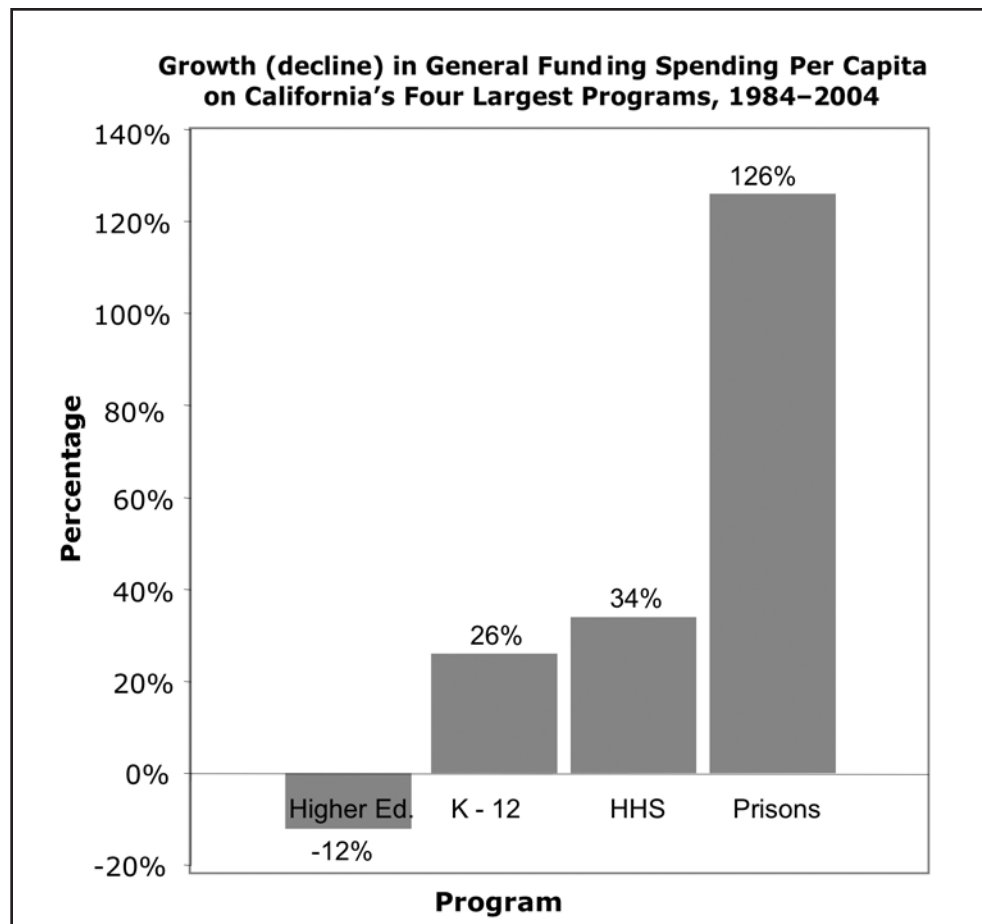
These tax cuts on the rich were brought about by a tsunami of money spent on lobbying and campaign contributions.

A second major cause for the budget crisis is explosive growth in prison spending in California.

What can we do to stop the cutbacks?

Over the long haul, the most important thing we can do is to join with others to build a sustained and visionary movement. We need to restore democracy, rebuild a transformed system of public education and public services, and win tax justice along with race and immigrant justice. Pull a few friends together, get informed and become involved! Some specific actions:

At SFSU, contact Campus Organizing Roundtable on Empowerment (CORE) <http://sfsuexperimentalcollege.blogspot.com>, Students for Quality Education: sfsu.sqe@gmail.com, or BSS Students of Color: bssstudentsofcolor@gmail.com, stay informed through www.calfac.org; At City College, contact Defend Our Education at pabrodriguez@yahoo.com, stay informed through www.cft.org; Defend Ethnic Studies and student support services like EOPS and DSPS; Help reform Prop 13 www.closeheloophole.com; Support AB 540, the California Dream Act, to make college affordable for immigrant high school students; Support AB 462, the College Affordability Act, a tax increase for those making more than 1 million a year to support university education; Stop AB 900, a law which calls for building 53,000 new prison beds in California at \$300,000 each—get your organization to sign on to the signature campaign of Californians United for a Responsible Budget (www.curbprisonspending.org); Drop the California attorney general's opposition to the ruling of a federal three-judge panel, which calls for releasing some 43,000 prisoners to restore our critically overcrowded prison system to a semblance of safety. Provide community-based support services and education to successfully reintegrate those coming home; Support proposals by the California Budget Project



We currently pay \$49,000 a year to keep a person in a cage, but less than a tenth of this—\$4,600—to support a student at Cal State University. In the words of the Chancellor of the CSU, "Something unthinkable has happened in California...We are now a state that places a higher priority on prison than on higher education" (SF Chronicle, 07.27.09).

for eliminating the 2/3 votes required to pass a budget and to increase taxes; Support the revenue proposals of the California Tax Reform Association (caltaxreform.org); Educate yourself about taxation (cft.org "Talking Taxes"); Read The Un-making of the Public University by Chris Newfield; Watch the video speakout4edu.com.

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