

Steve Westly *California State Controller*



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COMMUNITY COLLEGES, STUDENTS & STATE CONTROLLER CALL FOR BUDGET TO EASE FINANCIAL CRISIS

Los Angeles, July 24, 2003 – California State Controller Steve Westly today joined with four Southern California Community College Districts to plead for an end to the budget uncertainty that's jeopardizing classes.

"The State budget is 24 days overdue and it's causing real pain for California students," Westly said. "State funding makes up as much as 40% of Community College budgets. Our schools need every penny of that money and they need it now, before they're forced to close their doors."

Without a budget in place, the Controller is legally barred from issuing more than \$200 million each month to community colleges. Schools already reeling from budget cuts are now scrambling to make up for the funding delay.

"Without State funding we've had to borrow to cover our expenses, and we still may have to cancel classes," Dr. Piedad F. Robertson of Santa Monica Community College said. "This isn't fair to students who need to do academic planning."

Community colleges around Southern California are facing similar problems, including:

- Uncertainty over tuition increases, which cannot be determined until a budget is passed.
- Increased costs to retroactively bill students for fee increases after the budget is passed
- Increased costs to process paperwork for students who apply for additional financial aid
- Increase in enrollment from students trying to finish classes before fees increase.
- Possibility of canceling classes and/or laying off teachers.

Controller Westly called on lawmakers in Sacramento to pass a budget as soon as possible so students and Community Colleges can move forward. The Controller noted that the problem is worse this year than in the past because a recent court ruling means the State has no authority to pay community colleges without a budget in place.

Representatives from Santa Monica Community College District, Los Angeles Community College District, and Ventura County Community College District attended today's news conference.

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