



PRESS RELEASE

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Assembly Committee Gives Boost to Tuition Freeze Ballot Initiative

*AB 2372, the College Affordability Act, Also Potentially
Headed for November 2008 Ballot*

On Tuesday, March 25th, the Assembly Higher Education Committee voted to protect college students by approving AB 2372, the College Affordability Act of 2008.

The bill, authored by Assemblymember Joe Coto (D – San Jose), would freeze tuition (“fees”) at the UC and CSU for five years. After those five years, any future increases could not exceed the rate of inflation. The bill would provide a new source of revenue for the university through a 1% tax on personal taxable income above a million dollars, as well as create an accountability panel to ensure the revenue is used specifically to educate students.

AB 2372 is almost identical to a statewide ballot measure currently in circulation and potentially headed for the November 2008 ballot. That effort, under the banner of Students & Families for Tuition Relief Now, is being led by thousands of student and parent volunteers on 30 campuses across the state.

Campaign Director Chris Vaeth explained the two-pronged approach: “While collecting signatures to qualify for the ballot, student leaders are frequently asked why they are not instead pursuing a legislative route. AB 2372 is our answer. We have frankly been frustrated by past attempts at getting a tuition bill through the Legislature. But we are willing to offer the Legislature an opportunity to try again. We welcome passage of the College Affordability Act through the Legislature or on the ballot, or in any way that enacts the first long-term tuition policy in decades.”

After asking for the Assemblymembers’ votes, Lead Organizer Valeria Fike-Rosales then asked for their signatures. The campaign has until approximately April 17 to submit the signatures. Sacramento State student Valencia Henley explained: “They told me at this university that I could dream. But I didn’t know my dreams were going to be taxed.”

Explaining his vote, Assemblymember Anthony Portantino said: “The two students who took a two-hour bus ride – they should have been in class – were quite passionate in presenting their case on why we need to make sure our colleges maintain that spirit of the 1960 Master Plan.”

Assemblymember Jim Beall, a San Jose State graduate, echoed the students’ testimony: “I worked 30 to 40 hours as a student, but my wages didn’t come close to paying for my tuition and expenses. I had to borrow huge sums of money to pay for tuition. Unless we do something radically about tuition ... we will have an undereducated state of California. That would be the worst economic disaster we possibly think of.”

Cheers and high fives erupted from the students and supporters following the vote. The bill now moves on to the Assembly Committee on Revenue & Taxation.

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