

California Budget: A Thanksgiving Message of Hope

By: Dr. Loretta Whitson

California's highly regarded Legislative Analyst's Office released a preliminary report, shockingly positive, and contrary to previously gloomy reports. My pessimistic self was pleasantly surprised to hear that the annual state financial outlook predicts, "A fast economic rebound from a recession," due to taxes received from the richest Californians. This projection is considered a windfall of revenue for K-12 schools and community colleges next year.

While additional funds may be used to pay off the \$12.5 billion in deferrals to districts that avoided funding cuts in this year's budget, it will also most likely give districts more money to spend next year. While CASC was supporting the passage of Proposition 51, and we were disappointed in its narrow defeat, this news cannot come at a better time and is a breath of fresh air.

Covid restrictions has placed a heavy burden on education...frankly, education is more expensive than ever, and so best-bet predictions are contingent upon resolving the Covid crisis and getting people back to work. Gov. Gavin Newsom will unveil his 2021-22 budget in January which will shed some light on California's funding direction. Newsom, along with legislators will face pressure from unions and other advocacy groups to raise taxes as numerous safety nets collapse. There are a lot of competing needs. Nearly 750,000 Californians will lose federal unemployment benefits at the end of December when certain provisions of the CARES Act expire, according to [a new analysis from the California Policy Lab](#).

Another element of good news for school counseling comes from President-elect Joe Biden. In his plan for education <https://joebiden.com/education/> he proposes to "double the number of [school] psychologists, counselors, nurses, social workers, and other health professionals in our schools so our kids get the mental health care they need." While this is not an immediate action that we can look to for the 2021-22 school year - it is outstandingly positive news. Biden's wife, Dr. Jill Biden is an educator, and has committed to putting her energy to improving education in the United States. No doubt, her influence will be felt on our industry in positive ways.

The future of California's Prek-12 educational system is dependent on a strong, sustainable economy. The sooner the economy strengthens, the sooner the future will be more predictable. The final good news is that CASC's work this past year is paying off with Sacramento stakeholder. There is hardly a lawmaker in Sacramento who does not understand the value and the importance of the work of school counselors. Your dues go to this effort, including a fulltime lobbyist which is a priority set by the CASC Board a number of years ago. As we celebrate a day of Thanksgiving this week, truly we can be thankful for good news that translate into services for California's children and youth.