

California Students Get Relief, 2007-2008 State Budget Passed

By Amit Agarwal



An impasse blocking the approval of the 2007-2008 California state budget that provoked widespread discontentment among students and parents was finally resolved on August 24. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger approved the state budget after a 52-day deadlock, enabling students to access state grants just as their fall semesters began.

The budget released almost \$11 million in grants to San Francisco State University (SFSU) students a few days before they started their classes, providing relief to those who depend on Cal Grants for their housing, textbook, and transportation needs.

For the University of California, the final budget allocated \$3.27 billion (reflecting a 6.4% increase in funding from the previous year) for the fiscal year that began July 1.

The standoff resulted because 14 Republican state senators disagreed with parts of the budget and refrained from voting for its passage, preventing it from receiving approval by the required two-thirds majority. Finally, on August 21, Minority Leader Dick Ackerman and Senator Abel Maldonado decided to support the \$145 billion budget.

During the standoff, the state controller's office accumulated about 60,000 unpaid claims submitted by hospital, school, and childcare programs. State education officials contend that there was a contingency plan in place to provide funding if the budget's approval was delayed further. Campuses with surplus funds were to provide loans to students that would have been repaid with Cal Grants.

As state legislators have missed the June 30 budget-approval deadline 13 times in the last 20 years, this year's delay did not come as a surprise to many.