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CV Schools Brace for More Cuts As State's Fiscal Crisis Worsens

By : Robert Souza : 5/27/09

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California is facing a \$21 billion shortfall after voters last week rejected a series of measures to help keep the state solvent.

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So, as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced on Thursday that he is seeking more cuts on top of the \$9 billion in spending reductions he had already asked for, Castro Valley school officials braced for more reverberations of the state's worsening fiscal crisis.

"It means additional uncertainty since the state is now facing a \$21 billion dollar deficit," said Interim Schools Superintendent, Jerry Macy. "We believe Castro Valley education will face additional cuts of \$5 million over the next year."

The failure of the five ballot measures, a decision made by less than a quarter of eligible voters, will bring California's schools down from 47th to 50th in the nation in per-student funding, according to the Castro Valley School District's Website which says the district weathered a difficult situation of the state's deteriorating economy for the past two years.

Macy explained that as everything falls into place in Sacramento, the full impact of reductions on the district may not be felt until the fall and hopes the community will continue its support of Castro Valley schools. "We don't want to rely on the state for our financial solution.

That's why all our booster groups, the Education and Sports Foundation, the Save our Schools Castro Valley (SOSCV) people and all our local organizations are very important to us," he said.

The SOSCV organization, founded by local parents Allen Mueller and Brett Pletcher, has already secured \$6,000 in community donations for the district's general fund.

"We're progressing towards our goal of raising \$3 million for the district," said cofounder Mueller. "Our message is that we are faced with a crisis that will do nothing but get worse."

With district cuts translating to about \$500 per student, the SOSCV hopes to raise some \$350 per student within a year through an aggressive campaign.

According to Mueller, that goal is attainable through a donation of less than a dollar a day per student. "The quality of life, our home prices, every reason we moved to Castro Valley is at risk here," he said.

Macy said an additional \$2.3 in Federal Stimulus money is due, but that it may not be enough to offset another \$5 million in potential cuts.

District officials are now looking to update their approach to the 2009-10 budget by building all cuts from February into the budget and maximizing current year-end reserves to soften the blow for the next year, as they wait for the results of the governor's June 8 budget revision.

"There are more reductions to come and it's looking grim," Macy told The Forum.

In April, the school board authorized preliminary layoff notices to be sent to 26 employees, the first such layoffs in the district in 17 years.

"We don't know what it will all be like, but we will do what we can to minimize cuts, and we will work with our benefactors to see how much the community will step up with to soften the blow," said Macy, who reiterated the importance of Castro Valley's parent volunteers.

For more budget updates, visit www.cv.k12.ca.us/budget. Information on the SOSCV can be found at www.soscv.org.

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