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BUDGET DEMONSTRATES STATE'S DRASTIC DYSFUNCTION

BAY AREA COUNCIL STRENGTHENS CALL FOR CALIFORNIA CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

SAN FRANCISCO, September 15, 2008 — Today the Bay Area Council put out the following statement attributable to Jim Wunderman, President & CEO of the Bay Area Council, regarding a possible California state budget deal:

“This year’s budget deadlock shows better than perhaps any other recent event that our state needs a constitutional convention to fix a governance system that is hopelessly broken.

“The defining feature of this budget is that it only makes next year’s budget worse, and ‘next year’ is only nine months away. Of course, it’s not just the budget. As we have previously stated, California’s government suffers from drastic dysfunction – our prisons overflow, our water system teeters on collapse, our once proud schools are criminally poor, our financing system is bankrupt, our democracy produces ideologically-extreme legislators that can pass neither budget nor reforms, and we have no recourse in the current system to right these wrongs. Drastic times call for drastic measures.

“On Thursday, August 21 – fed up with the state’s dysfunction and the inability to get changes we desperately need – the Bay Area Council called for a constitutional convention with an op ed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. It is fair to say that we have been surprised and overwhelmed by the response from our members, the media, former and current elected leaders, civic and business groups, and just plain citizens whom have gone out of their way to thank us for the effort and urged us to continue. The issue clearly has traction. It appears we have successfully tapped a rich vein of frustration driven by the budget crisis, several high-profile legislative failures over the past two years, a negative economy, and a realization that maybe the Recall wasn’t enough. The Council is laying the groundwork to authorize a Constitutional Convention either through the legislature or by the initiative process.

“We feel it is our duty to declare that our California government is not only broken, it has become destructive to our future. We think we have a duty to try to fix our government.

“We want to make clear that we do not believe California’s problem is with the inherent quality of our elected officials. The problem is the very system and rules of governance enshrined in our current Constitution.

“We are currently considering and researching the following agenda items for a constitutional convention:

- Adopt a two-year budget cycle.
- Implement an open primary system and/or make state offices nonpartisan.

- Change the redistricting process.
- Create a system, similar to that in Texas, where every state agency is up for review and automatically abolished unless legislation is enacted to continue, merge or transfer their responsibilities.
- Reform California's system of taxation and spending, and ties to local government spending.
- Address the initiative process, raise the minimum number of signatures required.
- Remove 2/3rds requirement on passing a budget (either if the increase is below 5%, or altogether).
- Guarantee steady funding for infrastructure.
- Enable greater funding for education in exchange for important reforms.

“California’s constitution was always meant to be a living document that could adjust to the times. The time has come to make serious adjustments. As Thomas Jefferson would remind us, this is not just a right, it is a patriot’s solemn duty.”

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About the Bay Area Council

The Bay Area Council is a business-sponsored, public-policy advocacy organization for the nine-county Bay Area. The Council proactively advocates for a strong economy, a vital business environment, and a better quality of life for everyone who lives here. Founded in 1945, as a way for the region’s business community and like-minded individuals to concentrate and coordinate their efforts, the Bay Area Council is widely respected by elected officials, policy makers and other civic leaders as the voice of Bay Area business. Today, more than 275 of the largest employers in the region support the Bay Area Council and offer their CEO or top executive as a member. Our members employ more than 500,000 workers, or 1 of every six private sector employees in the Bay Area.