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Legi Update, May 27, 2003

Final Budget Agreement Reached

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At 3:30 pm on Tuesday, the Assembly finally passed the state budget bill on a vote of 56 to 22 and sent it to the Governor for final action. The legislative session, which started at 12:00 noon on Monday, was the longest legislative day in California history. The Governor has indicated publicly that he will sign this budget and the accompanying trailer bills.

The final agreements between the two parties that allowed the budget to be passed does not change the agreement on school funding that was set out in the Governor's May Revise and was approved by the Budget Conference Committee in late May.

The school library line-item in the budget remains intact. **CSLA members should feel good about the success they have had in keeping the program in place during such a difficult budget year.** Additionally, the **program is funded with a total of \$8.67 million** that will be distributed during the 2003-04 fiscal year on a per student basis. This is a reduction of \$15 million from the January Budget.

The final Budget does allow districts to use ending fund balances for categorical restricted reserves (including the School Library Fund) to be used for General Fund purposes as they were during this current year under the provisions of SB 18x.

This budget agreement establishes a program to pay off more than \$10 billion in prior year debt over five years and also acknowledges that there is a \$ 7 billion shortfall in the 2004-05 fiscal year. This will make balancing next year's budget even more difficult than it was this year. The Proposition 98 Guarantee is at a minimum, so any large reduction next year could require a suspension of Prop 98.

Now is a good time to begin another round of communications with your legislators. Thank them for approving a budget that kept most K-12 programs intact and that provided reasonable funding for school libraries. Also, let them know how important it is to

continue that school library funding to provide the needed continuity for school literacy programs. We need to begin build our alliances for next year's budget fight.

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California School Library Association 717 K Street, Suite 515 Sacramento, CA 95814-3477
916-447-2684 FAX: 916-447-2695 csla@pacbell.net

Website comments or questions:

Tom Kaun, CSLA Vice President, Educational Technology, tomkaun@yahoo.com

www.schoollibrary.org