



For Immediate Release – February 5, 2004

Contact: Ron Roach (916) 930-3104 or ron@caltax.org

CAL-TAX HONORS SACRAMENTO BEE'S DEB KOLLARS FOR "PAYING FOR SCHOOLS" PROJECT

SACRAMENTO – The California Taxpayers' Association today presented a special achievement award recognizing Deb Kollars, senior writer of *The Sacramento Bee*, for investigative reporting that dug deep into the bureaucratic maze of public school finance in California.

"Paying for Schools," a continuing news project, began with three segments published during 2003. They provide an unprecedented look at questionable spending practices and gross inefficiencies, particularly in the state's "categorical" programs that are costing taxpayers billions of dollars with little measurable benefits for children. State mandates and revenue limits were also covered. As a result of these articles, the Legislature and governor have focused on reforms that would bring greater accountability and efficiency to the state's massive education budget.

On behalf of the Cal-Tax Board of Directors, Cal-Tax President Larry McCarthy presented the plaque recognizing Ms. Kollars for her excellent reporting that "enhances the debate on critical questions of school spending. These articles expose significant and long-festering fiscal weaknesses involving billions of tax dollars intended for the education of California's children."

Mr. McCarthy congratulated *The Bee*, including Executive Editor Rick Rodriguez, Managing Editor Joyce Terhaar and Project Editor Amy Pyle, for dedicating the resources to produce such an extraordinary example of public service journalism.

"These well-researched articles provide policy-makers, parents and the broader public an unprecedented and in-depth look at California's extremely complicated system of education finance. They have already prompted legislative hearings and reform proposals," Mr. McCarthy said.

The Bee has gathered the "Paying for Schools" articles as a continuing news project on its Web site: (<http://www.sacbee.com/projects>). Reprints are available by contacting The Bee's Customer Services Department at (916) 321-1111.