



## **Keeping Faith With Voters: Follow-Through and Accountability on California's \$40 Billion Infrastructure Investment**

In 2006, the Legislature and voters agreed on an ambitious \$40 billion bond package to invest in highways, schools, levee repair and affordable housing. The strong affirmative vote given by Californians for the bond package on November 7 demonstrates once again that a majority of California voters have hope that state government will address this state's critical needs for a comprehensive public works program.

The ominous threat now facing this state's taxpayers and voters is that portions of this bond package opportunity can be squandered. If history is a guide, key decision-makers can delay, become indecisive and use poor planning in the implementation of this investment. In addition, environmental organizations have signaled their agenda to divert or slow large portions of the bond proceeds.

If supporters of the bonds conclude the job is done with the election, there will be a massive loss to delay, diversion, and waste. In the past 16 years, voters have stepped up with funding for infrastructure and investment, only to see too much foot-dragging and slow implementation.

It will be vitally important to require accountability now to sustain the effort and to work to assure cost-effective and prompt investment in infrastructure projects consistent with voter hopes.

### **Action Steps That Can Be Taken Immediately**

- Support realistic and measurable performance goals for each of the bonds. Written goals and timelines for projects from state agencies must be requested immediately. If goals are delayed for 12 to 24 months, project costs increase, reducing effectiveness of the bond funding taxpayers have authorized. The governor and legislative leadership must insist on immediate action and detailed planning and accountability on timelines.
- Urge the governor to appoint a "Bond Czar" to assure that bond funds are spent to build infrastructure in a timely, cost-effective manner. The role of the Bond Czar could be expansive in helping to establish and monitor goals. The Bond Czar could work to keep projects on track, as well as to bring to the governor's attention a state agency, local

agency, environmental organization or any organized resistance to effective bond investment implementation.

- Develop an information program to bring public attention to any delay or diversion. State departments of transportation and water resources can delay projects with impunity if leverage is not applied. Critical leverage can be applied through public information followed by careful oversight by the governor and Legislature. Unnecessary delays of the projects cannot be tolerated. The news media in California has been watchful and has reported on mismanagement of public funds. It is reasonable to expect that the media will focus public attention on slow or mismanaged projects.