In his FY 2013-14 budget proposal, the Governor stated that now is the time to review, “...what role, if any, the state should play in school facilities funding.” Since its creation in 1980, C.A.S.H. has always advocated for the state’s role in providing the “safe, secure, and peaceful” schools as called for in the California Constitution.

Historically, this obligation, sometimes referred to as the “Three Legged Stool”, has been met through the joint funding partnership between the state, local school districts/county offices of education and developers. Yet in addition to the Governor questioning the role of the state in school facilities, School Facility Program (SFP) funding is exhausted and Level 3 developer fee contributions are statutorily frozen. Our foundation is now left teetering on one leg – the high passage rate of local school bonds.

On Wednesday, April 24, 2013, the Coalition for Adequate School Housing (C.A.S.H.) held its first Legislative Action Day. The objective was to highlight the need for a statewide school bond in 2014 to ensure that school districts have access to state funds to leverage local resources to meet their student enrollment needs, and to restore the joint funding partnership and the integrity of the wobbly one-legged stool.

The day began with a morning briefing of participants led by Jenny Hannah, and then the larger group was broken down into five Advocacy Teams each led by C.A.S.H. Board Members including Jenny Hannah, Lyn Gruber, Don Ulrich, Jeff Becker and myself. Each Advocacy Team attended preset meetings with legislators to deliver the common message of the need for a school bond in 2014. The objective was to humanize the argument by having practitioners tell the stories of what a statewide school bond would mean for their local schools and communities.

While the members of each Advocacy Teams highlighted their local needs and issues, the central message from each team was the same: We Need a School Bond in 2014. Specifically, each Advocacy Team informed legislators that the state has a Constitutional requirement to provide safe and secure schools, that the School Facility Program (SFP) has been very effective over the past 15 years, and that SFP eligibility demonstrates an existing $8.4 billion New Construction and $3.5 billion Modernization need. The reference documents used by the Advocacy Teams are reproduced elsewhere in this issue and I encourage you to review them as a reference and summary of C.A.S.H.’s argument for a 2014 school bond. (see “Talking Points: Need for a Statewide School Bond” and “Why We Need A 2014 School Bond” on pages 10-12).

In addition to these key points, team members added that schools are the anchors of the community and any state investment in infrastructure should include schools, that a state bond is necessary to encourage schools to commit and leverage their local funding, that new programs such as Common Core...
will require appropriate facilities to support the necessary technological infrastructure, and that a school bond will create good jobs in local communities.

It is often said that because buildings don’t speak for themselves, we must speak for them. We must be their voice, their advocates. There is much hard work to be done to ensure that a statewide school bond is on the ballot in 2014, but the C.A.S.H. Legislative Action Day was an unquestioned success as a first step toward realizing this important objective. I would like to sincerely thank all those who participated. Your time, commitment, and most of all, your passion adds greatly to our organization and to this effort. To continue our momentum, C.A.S.H. will hold more Legislative Action Days this year and next, and I strongly urge C.A.S.H. members who did not participate to join this effort and add your voice to our collective voice.