



Statement

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**During Special Session Legislators must Compromise on Budget,
Not on Progress**

**Statement by Terry Brooks,
Executive Director, Kentucky Youth Advocates**

With the special session scheduled to begin on May 24, the General Assembly's approach to the budget may never be more important than it is right now. Their actions in the midst of the recession can put Kentucky on a path to growth when the economy recovers or can severely impede our progress as a state and put us at a long-term disadvantage relative to our neighbors.

Ideally, we would have liked to see the Governor suggest a balanced approach in his budget proposal – one that included both targeted cuts and recurring sources of new revenue. However, in light of political realities, the Governor made a good-faith effort to create a budget that brings together what both chambers agreed to initially. Avoiding across-the-board cuts and preserving priority areas like health, education, and public safety are important moves for ensuring Kentucky does not emerge too damaged from the recession.

We had hoped for a more comprehensive call that would have allowed consideration of raising the legal dropout age to 18 – an important step that would have minimal fiscal impact now and improve our state's economic outlook in the form of more high school graduates.

Given the context of the call, we are even more disappointed that, so far, it does not include HJR 122 – legislation that would require the examination of tax expenditures. Failure to include it means that we will continue to find ourselves without a real understanding of which business tax breaks work and which don't. The limited call misses this key opportunity to encourage efficiency of our precious state dollars by insisting that we only pay for proven economic development measures.

It is up to House and Senate leadership at this point. Without a compromise between our legislative leaders, Kentuckians will face government shutdown. We have better choices

than that. It is time policymakers buckle down and fulfill their duty to agree on a responsible budget.

We hope policymakers will not forget lessons learned during this budget-crafting process, and will continue to consider a balanced approach, that includes new revenue, when the next inevitably difficult budget session arrives.

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Kentucky Youth Advocates is the home of Kentucky's Tax and Budget Initiative.