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Controller Chiang Launches 'California Strong' Project

SACRAMENTO – State Controller John Chiang today launched his "California Strong" project, which brings all of the Controller's financial and tax assistance and educational seminars together under one umbrella. "California Strong: Helping Families, Communities and Businesses Grow Financially" partners the Controller's Office with community groups, nonprofits, educational institutions and chambers of commerce to financially empower individuals, families, seniors, and small- and women-owned businesses across the State. Together, they will offer multi-language seminars, workshops and other public events on a wide range of topics.

"There is enormous value in partnerships," Controller Chiang said. "Together, we can break down the barriers between Californians and their government, and connect real services to real people in need."

The project is a continuation of the taxpayer education efforts the Controller initiated during his tenure on the State Board of Equalization. Those programs connected new small business owners and nonprofit organizations in the Los Angeles area with tax experts to explain complex compliance issues, reduce tax errors, and make sure that any available tax credits were claimed. That effort proved so successful, it was expanded statewide and a web-based version is now available online at www.californiastrong.ca.gov.

Since taking office as Controller in January 2007, Chiang has created an unprecedented assistance program to provide local officials, small businesses and non-profits with the tools and guidance they need to protect their funds while complying with state business and tax laws and regulations. To ensure working families and seniors get all tax credits they have earned, the Controller's staff has coordinated volunteer efforts to assist more than 4,000 low- and moderate-income families and individuals with their income tax filing preparation, helping them qualify for about \$5.5 million in refunds and tax credits.

As Controller, Chiang and his staff continue to provide free tax preparation to moderate- and low-income families. His office trains volunteers to prepare basic tax returns for households with incomes below \$50,000, often helping them qualify for large tax refunds and the Earned Income Tax Credit. The California Strong website also includes "State Finances 101," which provides basic information on how the State gets its revenues and how tax dollars are spent, and "Your Finances, Your Future," which provides financial education and resources for individual, families and communities.

"As the State's Chief Fiscal officer, I want to make the financial expertise housed in my office available to all Californians who want to learn how to lower their household debt, grow their businesses, pay for their children's education, and save for a secure retirement," said Chiang. "Financially healthy families make financially healthy communities, which, in turn, strengthen our State's fiscal health."

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