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## *FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

October 3, 2003

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### *Proposition 54: A Grave Threat to Efforts to Improve Education For California's Minority Children*

(OAKLAND, CA) – **T**he Education Trust—West today released a report showing how California's efforts to improve education for all children will fall short if Proposition 54, the Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, or National Origin Initiative, is passed by voters Tuesday.

Proposition 54, an initiative to amend the California constitution, will appear on next week's recall ballot. If passed, it will bar the state from collecting, analyzing, or using most racial or ethnic data in relation to any state program, including in the operation of our education system. Health care, housing and law enforcement are among the other state operations that will be impacted.

Proponents of the initiative have suggested any effect on education would be limited because of two exemptions in Proposition 54, for data required to comply with federal law and to remain eligible for federal funds. According to Education Trust—West, that is inaccurate.



"Let us be clear, Proposition 54 will have a devastating impact," said Russlynn Ali, Executive Director for the Education Trust—West upon releasing the report. "It will deprive everyone who wants to help make schools better – teachers, principals, policymakers and advocates – of the most powerful spotlight they now have to see and measure how well we're educating *all* of California's children. Honest data."

Certain federal laws, most notably the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Higher Education Act (HEA) require states to collect and disaggregate some education data by race and ethnicity. Under NCLB, for example, states must test student achievement in reading and mathematics yearly in grades 3-8 and once again in high school. Because California must collect that data to remain eligible for federal funds, that information will not be lost altogether.

But, according to the EdTrust—West report, California might not be able to see or use a lot of that information. Still more data that California now collects would disappear – and the State would be prevented from taking steps to collect additional types of data

education reformers say they desperately need. This would seriously undermine efforts to create strategies targeted to help all children improve, and to evaluate if those strategies are working.



Proposition 54 would, for example, deprive California of the right to see that African American and Latino students are about half as likely as their white and Asian peers to take the high-school classes they need to be eligible for admission to the University of California or California State University. We wouldn't know, for that matter, that only 40% of our White students successfully complete the required high school curriculum. It would deprive California of the right to see that certain groups of children are still "tracked" into low-rigor courses, despite California's efforts to demand all children learn to high-standards. It would deprive California of the right to know which students apply to college.

Without this information, the report says, the challenge to educators to improve achievement and college-going will grow dramatically.

"Yes, we want to progress toward a blended society where race and ethnicity are increasingly irrelevant. But we aren't there yet," Ali said. "And we're never going to get there if we lose our right to uncover the very real inequities that continue to permeate our schools and our society. Data is about so much more than just checking those little boxes. It's about knowing where we've fallen short on helping all children learn. It's about giving us a real lever to improve the system for every child."



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