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APA Applauds Passage of California's Prop. 63 *Ballot Measure to Raise About \$800M Annually for Mental Health*

Arlington, Va. – The American Psychiatric Association (APA) applauds California voters' recent approval of Proposition 63, a ballot measure to boost mental health services in the state. The initiative was supported by nearly five million voters (or about 53 percent) on Nov. 2.

The measure is expected to raise \$1.8 billion by the end of fiscal year 2006-07 by imposing an extra one-percent tax on personal incomes greater than \$1 million. Importantly, it also protects existing mental health funds from further state cutbacks.

“Californians took a stand for mental health and we applaud them,” said APA President Michelle Riba, M.D., M.S. “Voters saw that people are suffering from real illnesses and deserve better care. By protecting current state funds and adding a new, consistent stream of funds, voters have initiated an era of more and better mental health services.”

Proposition 63 will help counties expand services and develop innovative programs for people – including children and seniors – who struggle with mental illnesses. By expanding *county* mental health services, the measure has the added benefit of helping the state and localities save a substantial but unknown amount of money.

The measure also requires the state to develop prevention, early intervention, education and training programs.

“Californians have seen the results of failing to provide adequate treatment: suicides, incarcerations, unemployment, homelessness, and problems at school,” said Rodrigo A. Muñoz, M.D., an APA past president and California-based psychiatrist. “Voters saw there is a better way. Psychiatrists and other mental health professionals really can help people suffering from mental illnesses, but it requires a serious and sustained investment. I’m pleased my fellow Californians were willing to make that investment.”

To secure passage of Proposition 63, the APA worked under the umbrella of the Campaign for Mental Health Reform, a coalition that included the California Psychiatric Association (CPA), other mental health advocacy organizations, other physician groups, and family/patient advocacy organizations. Also, at the request of the CPA, the APA made a significant financial contribution to the grassroots effort in support of this initiative.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society, founded in 1844, whose more than 36,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. For more information, visit the APA Web site at www.psych.org.

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