



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 2, 2007**

**Contact: Shannon Murphy
(202) 870-1093 - cell**

**MTV JOINS STRONG AMERICAN SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE
EDUCATION REFORM ON EVE OF FIRST GOP PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE**

***\$60 Million Initiative Backed by the Broad and Gates Foundations Calls on All
Presidential Candidates to Offer Real Solutions for Improving America's Public Schools***

LOS ANGELES — In the first major public event following its kick-off, the Strong American Schools campaign is partnering with MTV to highlight the importance of education reform in the 2008 presidential campaign. Held on the eve of the first Republican presidential primary debate, the event featured a roundtable discussion with school leaders and students discussing this vital issue and was moderated by Strong American Schools Chairman Roy Romer, California State Superintendent of Education, Jack O'Connell and MTV News Correspondent SuChin Pak. The event took place at Grant High School in Los Angeles.

"MTV is an icon among young American citizens, many of whom understand firsthand just how important education reform is to the future of this country," stated former Republican National Committee Chairman Ken Mehlman, a Strong American Schools board member. "That's why we're so proud MTV is co-sponsoring this event with Strong American Schools and helping to make sure the voices of future generations are heard loud and clear by presidential hopefuls of both parties."

"We've worked hard in California to raise expectations and hold schools accountable," said State Superintendent Jack O'Connell. "Improving test scores show our students, teachers and schools are working hard to meet this challenge, but much more work needs to be done to prepare all students for success in the 21st century. Our state and every state needs a commitment from our nation's leaders to invest in public schools, to give teachers the support they need and students the education they must have to survive in today's demanding global economy."

"We're proud to partner with Strong American Schools to amplify the voices of America's youth and help make education reform a top priority for every candidate," said Dave Sirulnick, Executive Vice President, MTV Multiplatform, News, Production & Music. "Few issues affect young people more than today's dropout crisis and we're committed to offering them a platform and the tools to bring about the changes that are desperately needed."

1150 17th St., NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20036

www.strongamericanschools.org

Strong American Schools, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is a nonpartisan campaign supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation promoting sound education policies for all Americans. SAS does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation.

Launched in April, Strong American Schools is a nonpartisan public awareness and action campaign designed to give a voice to every American who demands strong leadership to improve our schools. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, the goal of the \$60 million campaign is to elevate education reform to the top of the presidential campaign agenda between now and November 2008.

“Each year more than 1 million students drop out of high school. That’s one child every 29 seconds,” said Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “We all must demand that candidates and our leaders share their opinions and policies on how our country will offer all young people Strong American Schools.”

“The American dream is slipping away, and unless our leaders dramatically improve our public schools, our standard of living, our economy and our very democracy will be threatened,” said Eli Broad, founder of The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. “Our country’s education system is no longer the best in the world. We need every American to demand better schools and specific policy solutions from presidential candidates. Our future depends on it.”

Seventy percent of all American 8th graders are not proficient in reading and sadly, most will never catch up. In California alone, 45 percent of college freshman are not prepared for college-level English and are required to take remedial catch-up courses, according to a new study by the California State University System.

Since its inception, MTV has been committed to empowering its audience to effect change on the issues that matter to them most. As part of an ongoing effort to help more high school students graduate prepared for college, career and life, MTV News will soon premiere “The Dropout Chronicles,” a new documentary that follows 3 high school students approaching graduation but on the brink of dropping out. The special premieres on-air May 9th (MTV: 2pm ET/PT; MTV2: 8:30pm ET/PT) and will also be screened that day at the “National Summit on America’s Silent Epidemic,” where Congressional leaders, students, governors and educators will put in motion a plan to help end America’s dropout crisis. The summit is co-sponsored by MTV, TIME Magazine, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Civic Enterprises and the National Governors Association and will feature diverse speakers including Mrs. Laura Bush, MTV President Christina Norman, Tim Russert and many other leading voices on the topic.

Strong American Schools launched its “ED in ‘08” campaign last month on the eve of the first Democratic Party primary debate in South Carolina. “ED in ‘08” is a sweeping public awareness and action campaign that will mobilize the public and presidential candidates around solutions for the country’s education crisis. The campaign brings together for the first time leaders of all major political parties who are willing to address education as an American challenge rather than a narrow political issue. Strong American Schools will use the tools of a modern presidential campaign to take the issue to the general public and give Americans many ways for their voices to be

1150 17th St., NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20036

www.strongamericanschools.org

Strong American Schools, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is a nonpartisan campaign supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation promoting sound education policies for all Americans. SAS does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation.

heard—including on-the-ground activities in key presidential primary states and a cutting-edge interactive E-campaign based on the Web at www.EDin08.com.

As part of its call to action, Strong American Schools will urge leaders to address and debate three common-sense priorities that hold tremendous promise for improving education:

- 1) **Strong American education standards.** Regardless of where they live, all students need to acquire knowledge and skills that prepare them for college, for the workplace, and for life.
- 2) **Effective teachers in every classroom.** We need to enable teachers to improve their skills, measure teachers' performance in the classroom, and pay them more if they produce superior results or take on challenging assignments.
- 3) **More time and support for learning.** We need to provide successful and struggling students alike more time for in-depth learning and greater personal attention.

Strong American Schools' steering committee is comprised of prominent business, education, and political leaders. In addition to Broad and Romer, the steering committee includes: Allan Golston, President of the U.S. program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Janet Murguía, President and CEO of National Council of La Raza; Lou Gerstner, former CEO of IBM Corporation; John Engler, former Governor of Michigan and President of the National Association of Manufacturers; and Marc Lampkin, former 2000 Bush for President Deputy Campaign Manager and current Executive Director of Strong American Schools.

The foundations have committed up to \$60 million to support the campaign through November 2008. The effort is a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, an independent nonprofit organization providing program and management services for the campaign. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with state leadership offices opening across the country in the coming months. Strong American Schools does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation.

To join the "ED in '08" campaign, and for more information, log onto: www.EDin08.com.

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation is a national venture philanthropy established by businessman and philanthropist Eli Broad to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education, scientific and medical research and the arts. Broad, who founded two Fortune 500 companies, SunAmerica Inc. and KB Home, created The Broad Foundation to dramatically improve K-12 urban public education through better governance, management, labor relations and competition. The Broad Foundation's Internet address is www.broadfoundation.org.

1150 17th St., NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20036

www.strongamericanschools.org

Strong American Schools, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is a nonpartisan campaign supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation promoting sound education policies for all Americans. SAS does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation.

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** works to reduce inequalities and improve lives around the world. In developing countries, it focuses on improving health, reducing extreme poverty, and increasing access to technology in public libraries. In the United States, the foundation seeks to ensure that all people have access to a great education and to technology in public libraries. In its local region, it focuses on improving the lives of low-income families. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Patty Stonesifer and co-chairs William H. Gates Sr., Bill Gates, and Melinda French Gates. More information is available at www.gatesfoundation.org.

THINKMTV is the umbrella for the network's on-air, off-air and online "pro-social" campaigns that engage, educate and encourage young people to take action on some of the biggest challenges facing their generation, including the Break the Addiction campaign on global warming, the Choose or Lose campaign on the presidential election, and ongoing efforts with the Kaiser Family Foundation on sexual health and HIV/AIDS. THINKMTV and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have also joined in an ongoing effort aimed at using MTV's reach and credibility with young people, particularly low-income and minority youth, to provide them the tools, resources and media platform to graduate from high school prepared for college, career and life. The campaign consists of long-form documentaries such as the Dropout Chronicles and Think Over Your School, PSAs featuring high school students talking candidly about their aspirations for college and beyond; MTV News reports on young people and their educational aspirations; and online tools at <http://think.mtv.com>, including resources to prepare themselves for graduation, college, and the workplace.

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that helps donors to create thoughtful, effective philanthropy throughout the world. RPA provides research and counsel on charitable giving, develops philanthropic programs, and offers complete program, administrative and management services for foundations and trusts. For more information visit www.rockpa.org.

#####

1150 17th St., NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20036

www.strongamericanschools.org

Strong American Schools, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is a nonpartisan campaign supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation promoting sound education policies for all Americans. SAS does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation.