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"Reaching the Stars" CTE Summit Showcases Benefits of Career Technical Education

Summit message is clear — expanding CTE will reduce drop out rate, improve student performance, keep California's economy on cutting edge.

Sacramento, CA -- Former NASA astronaut, Ken Reightler, helped launch California's first annual Career Technical Education Summit today, where lawmakers saw the benefits of CTE in action and were urged to expand CTE instruction in the state's schools.

Reightler was joined by Lt. Gov. John Garamendi, Attorney General Jerry Brown, Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, legislators, educators and dozens of students from around the state, who demonstrated the skills they've gained through CTE at exhibits showcasing robotics, construction, agriculture, engineering, aerospace, biotechnology and other career areas.

"CTE has been shown to remarkably impact many students' desire to remain in school and to revitalize their commitment to education," featured speaker Ken Gray, author of the book *Other Ways to Win*, told the crowd. "We need to ensure that students know there are multiple pathways, in addition to college, that they can take to be successful and fulfilled."

"The message coming out of this summit is very clear," said Jack Stewart, president of the California Manufacturers and Technology Association and co-chair of the GetREAL coalition, which hosted the summit. "Career technical education improves academic achievement, makes school more relevant, provides students with new career and educational opportunities and is vital for the long-term health of California's economy."

"Career technical education is a proven winner with students, parents and the public," said GetREAL co-chair Bob Balgenorth, president of the State Building & Construction Trades Council of California.. "Expanding CTE will encourage more students to stay in school, teach them the value of work and give them skills that will benefit them whether they choose to attend college or begin their careers after graduating from high school. It opens the door to good-

paying jobs in a variety of exciting and vital fields."

The summit featured a NASA exhibit and panel discussion about the Constellation Program's Orion, the crew exploration vehicle to be used for missions to the moon and eventually Mars.

"Career Technical Education gave me the foundation to launch my career in the electronics and aerospace industry. It provided me with the skills I needed as a technician to work at Aerojet on many programs including NASA's Orion program. In my 25 years in the field, I have always seen a real demand for skilled technicians and we must do all we can to ensure we have these highly skilled workers in the future," said Aerojet Instrumentation and Controls Engineer, Kevin Schneider.

The summit also featured testimonials from parents, teachers and students who have benefited from CTE, along with business owners who warned about a growing shortage of skilled workers.

"It's getting increasingly difficult to find workers with the skills and knowledge needed in today's high-tech workplace," said ACE Clearwater President Kellie Johnson. "My business and California's economy can't compete without skilled workers, making the need to expand CTE instruction very urgent and very real."

Legislators discussed ways to expand CTE and agreed on a resolution to support state and local education policy reforms to make CTE an integral part of every student's education. More than 50 Democrats and Republican legislators signed the resolution (Download Resolution: www.cmta.net/cte_resolution.pdf).

"I have proposed requiring all high school students to take a minimum of two CTE courses in order to graduate" said State Senator Tom Torlakson. "We need to ensure that the Legislature takes action and restores CTE to its rightful place in California education."

St. Francis High School freshman, Ashley Peng, discussed one CTE-related project that has made an impact on her career choices. "Our team spent six weeks building this robot. It was great that so many people and so many different companies were able to see what my team has accomplished," she said. "My robotics team makes me look forward to going to school, learning new skills, and pursuing a career where I know I can use the skills I've learned."

It's clear that CTE allows students to explore potential careers and reinforces the theories and concepts of core academics through hands-on application. The "Reaching the Stars" Summit demonstrated that California can't

afford to keep 21st Century technical education from its students. NASA astronaut Ken Reightler might have said it best in his concluding presentation, "Who will be the next generation that will get us to Mars?"

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