



PRESS RELEASE
April 25, 2007

Contact: Shannon Murphy
Strong American Schools
(202) 870-1097 - cell

**STRONG AMERICAN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES TO PROMOTE
EDUCATION REFORM IN 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**
*Major Initiative Supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill &
Melinda Gates Foundation Calls for Improving America's Public Schools*

Columbia, S.C. — Flanked by scores of parents, volunteers and education reform advocates on the eve of the first 2008 presidential debate, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation announced today the launch of the Strong American Schools campaign aimed at elevating American education to the top of the presidential campaign agenda between now and November 2008. 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.

“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.”

Strong American Schools has launched “ED in ‘08”—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 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.

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.

“We’re calling on every American to support “ED in ’08.” Together, we can make education a top priority for all presidential candidates in this election,” said Strong American Schools Chairman Roy Romer, who has been a leader in education and government for the last 50 years. Romer was elected to three terms as governor of Colorado and most recently led the nation’s second largest school system as superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District. “If candidates aren’t talking about education, they’re not talking about the future. Without an educated and skilled workforce, America’s competitiveness and security are undermined. A strong America depends on strong American schools.”

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. In addition to the steering committee, the South Carolina leadership team is comprised of prominent political and civic leaders, including former governor Richard Riley and former U.S. Secretary of Education; former governor David Beasley; former lieutenant governor of South Carolina, Bob Peeler; former South Carolina Superintendents of Education: Barbara Nielsen and Inez Tenenbaum; and Iris Rhodes Campbell, the wife of the late governor Carroll A. Campbell Jr.

“The issues currently being debated on the campaign trail—national security, the environment and health care—share a core underpinning: education. Without highly educated students, America’s competitiveness and security are undermined, and our ability to solve the most complex challenges of the day is severely threatened,” said Murguía. “But this is about a moral failing too. Every child, regardless of his race or income, has a right to attend a high quality school and make a better future for himself. Right now in America, that is simply not the case for too many of our children.”

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 will be 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.

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** works to reduce inequities 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.

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.

#####