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CONTACT: Mark Eliot

Director of Communications

(714) 730-7339 meliot@tustin.k12.ca.us

Tustin Unified School District Files Lawsuit to Stop City Interference in TUSD's Efforts to Improve Schools

Tustin, CA – After nearly a year of red tape and bureaucratic wrangling, the Tustin Unified School District filed a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief to stop the City of Tustin from interfering with TUSD's efforts to make school improvements and build a new school to accommodate its growing student population.

The voters of Tustin twice approved bond measures to provide TUSD the resources needed to implement improvements to the schools such as a much-needed new state-of-the-art science center at Tustin High School. TUSD is also preparing to break ground on the construction of the new Heritage School located on a 10-acre site that TUSD owns in the northwest corner of the former Tustin Marine Corps Air Station.

Tustin Unified School District has all of the state approvals, environmental permits and financing needed to begin its school improvement projects immediately, yet the City has insisted that the school district comply with an additional layer of municipal red tape and bureaucratic regulations that do not apply to schools because they are regulated by the state.

"All we're trying to do is improve our schools," said TUSD Board President Francine Scinto. "The last thing we wanted to do was file a lawsuit. We spent more than a year communicating with the City about our school improvement plans. We have completed every regulatory step necessary to begin construction on our new school as well as our school modernization plan at Tustin High. I am puzzled by the City's desire to add unneeded bureaucratic red tape to the process. It is unfortunate that it has come to this."

"By passing not one, but two school bond measures, the voters of Tustin have clearly spoken," Scinto continued. "Our residents want and deserve to have state-of-the-art schools that will help Tustin schoolchildren continue to achieve scholastic excellence."

Construction of similar science buildings at Foothill High and Beckman High, other projects and building of new schools have proceeded within the portions of TUSD that are in the unincorporated Orange County area and in the City of Irvine in cooperation with those municipalities and with none of the red tape and bureaucratic demands being made by the City of Tustin. The City of Tustin is unique in the onerous and unprecedented barriers it has erected to school construction projects.

Tustin voters are rightfully concerned that Tustin's schools around the former base are already full while student enrollment continues to grow. TUSD has ranked first or second in school growth – both in number of students and as a percentage of the student population – for the past two years. New facilities are needed due to planned growth on the former base, they have all the legal approvals necessary and the funding is there. TUSD is asking a judge to direct the City to put away its red tape and allow the school district to plan responsibly for the educational future of Tustin's children.