



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

January 17, 2012

Please note that in addition to the traditional emailing of the CTEN monthly newsletter, we will once again post it on the CTEN blog- <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com/> As usual, there are several controversial issues covered in this letter and we urge you to share your opinions with other teachers.

Dear Colleague,

As the fiscal situation in California worsens, Governor Jerry Brown has come out with a budget that cuts even more from education. He and others are confident that a tax increase is in the cards, but this remains to be seen and teachers should not count on it. To read more, go to <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2012/01/07/BAOC1MM0FM.DTL>

Certainly a part of the state's financial malaise stems from the public employee pension "tsunami." The school districts and unions have sold the state a devastating bill of goods. Please don't assume that this won't affect you, even if you are already retired. Recently, in Rhode Island, some retired cops and firemen bit the bullet and took cuts to their pensions. It would behoove all public employees to stay on top of this issue and perhaps take the lead. I have written two pieces about this recently. I know not all of you will agree with what I wrote. Please share your thoughts with us on the CTEN blog.

(<http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com/>) To read my blog posts, go to redcounty.com/content/state-sponsored-thievery-continues-plain-sight and <http://redcounty.com/content/more-pension-truths-and-why-you-should-be-very-angry> Additionally, a good website for keeping up with news about public employee pensions is <http://pensionsunami.com/>

The National Education Association seems to have jumped on the reform bandwagon and it has issued a "Three Point Plan for Reform."

(http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA_3point_plan_for_reform.pdf) What will come of this no one knows. Unfortunately we've been down this road with NEA before and typically, nothing much comes of their good sounding talk. Either their reforms become adulterated and rendered meaningless or the state and local affiliates want nothing to do with them.

In another olive branch move, NEA Pres. Dennis Van Roekel co-wrote an article with a former enemy, Teach For America's Wendy Kopp.

(<http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/story/2011-12-20/teachers-education-public-schools/52121868/1>) An odd couple if ever there was one! In fact, their collaboration upset many people, including Matt Damon's mother Nancy Carlsson-Paige who was so upset by it that she told NEA that her son would not be accepting the NEA's "Friend of Education" award. According to Mike Antonucci, "The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* report that

Dr. Carlsson-Paige has rejected the nomination on behalf of herself and her son, because of what she calls a “collaboration” between NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and Teach for America. TFA, according to the *Post*’s description, “recruits newly minted college graduates who are not education majors and gives them five weeks of summer training before placing them in classrooms in high-poverty schools. Recruits are asked to commit to only two years of teaching.” (<http://hotair.com/greenroom/archives/2012/01/05/matt-damons-mom-wont-let-him-accept-nomination-for-nea-award/>)

Mike Antonucci also reports that NEA continues to lose members, down 169,000 in the last three years - <http://www.eiaonline.com/archives/20111219.htm> This hasn’t seemed to hurt their lobbying efforts, however, which included fifty NEA activists sending over 17,000 e-mails to Congress, which comes to about an email a day from each of the fifty writers. (<http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2011/12/19/youve-got-mail/>)

As schools of education have come under fire lately, I was asked to write a piece about them for the online publication, *Clarion Call* (<http://www.nationalreview.com/phi-beta-cons/287144/are-education-schools-our-weakest-link-george-leef>) which reportedly generated a pretty good response. I’d like to know how many of you had similar experiences in ed school. Once again, if you’d like to share your thoughts and experiences, the CTEN blog (<http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com/>) is the place to do that.

Last July, a Wall Street Journal editorial proclaimed 2011 “The Year of School Choice.” “School may be out for the summer, but school choice is in, as states across the nation have moved to expand education opportunities for disadvantaged kids. This year is shaping up as the best for reformers in a very long time.” To read more, go to (http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304450604576420330972531442.html?mod=googlenews_wsj) The Journal’s sentiment was echoed by Marcus Winters in the Washington Examiner in a piece called “Manhattan Moment: Why 2011 is the Year of the School Voucher.” (<http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/columnists/2011/11/manhattan-moment-why-2011-year-school-voucher>)

And, speaking of choice, National School Choice Week runs from January 22-28 this year. On Jan.24th, I will be speaking at an event in Los Angeles with former D.C. mayor Adrian Fenty - http://www.schoolchoiceweek.com/lissnell/reason_foundation_school_choice_celebration_in_los_angeles The next day, I will be in Santa Clara moderating an all-star panel. Gloria Romero, a former state senator, author of the Parent Trigger law and currently the State Director of Democrats for Education Reform, will be joined by Terry Moe, Stanford professor and Koret Task Force member and Lance Izumi, Senior Director of Education Studies at the Pacific Research Institute. For more information about this event, please go to http://www.schoolchoiceweek.com/8365/school_choice_for_santa_clara_county_with_terry_moe For all the NSCW events that week, please go to - <http://www.schoolchoiceweek.com/>

CTEN has two Facebook pages. If you have a Facebook account, we urge you to visit ours and let us know your thoughts. Having a dialogue among teachers is an effective way to spread information and experiences and share ideas. Our original Facebook page can be found here - <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=125866159932&ref=ts> Our second page, which deals with teacher evaluation and transparency, can be accessed here - <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=126900987357825&ref=ts>

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please continue to provide feedback so that we can continue to keep you informed, provoke discussion and meet your needs. Thank you very much.

Larry Sand
CTEN President