



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

February 26, 2008

Dear Colleague:

Our mission at CTEN is to present information to you that you probably don't get from your school district or union leaders, so that you can be fully informed on the issues and can act accordingly. In that vein, we're sending you this letter. We apologize in advance for the length--but this is what's necessary to give you, as Paul Harvey would say, the Rest Of The Story.

Do you know how the state and national unions spend *your* money? Are they spending your money in ways you approve?

We recently sent you a letter outlining the NEA's strong leftward slant when contributing money to groups and organizations. In the following paragraphs we're going to lay bare one particular point of CTA advocacy.

The CTA was a very strong supporter of Senate Bill 777, which was signed into law and became effective on January 1st of this year. **People of good conscience can disagree about the specifics and intent of the law**, but CTA's lobbying and support of something so clearly controversial--without consulting its membership--is paternalistic elitism at its most extreme. On the surface, SB777 appears to be a simple change to the education code, prohibiting discrimination in schools against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students. The author, State Senator Sheila Kuehl, was quoted in [the Sacramento Bee](#) as saying "It breaks no new ground" and only consolidates anti-discrimination statutes already in the education code.

Opponents, however, suggest a hidden agenda. Always referred to in the press as "far right wing opponents," these groups point out obvious flaws. Again, from the Bee:

Current state law bans classroom instruction or school-sponsored activities that "reflect adversely" on gays, lesbians or other protected classes.

Instead, SB 777 would focus the ban on teaching that "promotes a discriminatory bias."

In our litigious society, what does that mean? How might it be interpreted? The Capitol Resource Institute [writes](#):

To understand the full ramifications of this radical legislation, one needs only look at Los Angeles Unified School District's policy concerning transgender and "gender nonconforming" students. In this policy, teachers are instructed to keep a student's transgender status private, including from the student's parents. Teachers are told to consult the student first, before talking with parents, "to determine an appropriate way to reference the student's gender identity." This is an appalling school policy-treating parents as the enemy, at the expense of the student's relationship with family.

Even more alarming, the LAUSD policy instructs school to provided [sic] access to restroom and locker room facilities that "corresponds to the gender identity that the student consistently asserts at school." If a male student "consistently asserts" himself as a female at school, he will be granted access to female restrooms and locker rooms.

There are also concerns about "biased" teaching--if stories mention only heterosexual couples, for example, does that "promote a discriminatory bias"?

This law will clearly have a major effect on teachers and schools--did you know about it? Did you know CTA was an ardent supporter of this bill? Was this ever discussed on your campus by your union representatives? How does CTA's support of this bill improve your pay, benefits, and working conditions, the very items on which a labor union *should* be focusing?

Expect to hear more about this new law, and the initiative effort to overturn it, in coming months in the press. You can also find information on this topic and others at CTEN's web site, <http://www.ctenhome.org>.

Lastly, we encourage you to join the California Teachers Online

Community, our online bulletin board. Free registration is at <http://ctenhome.org/forums/ubbthreads.php> . Go take a look!

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors
California Teachers Empowerment Network