



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

May 19, 2009

Greetings,

As most Californians are well aware, the results of today's special election will help determine the fiscal direction our state will take in the near future. If the polling is at all accurate, the two props of most interest to teachers – 1A and 1B – will go down in flames. (It is interesting to note that CTA has spent millions in an attempt to get these two initiatives passed, while CFT opposes 1A but supports 1B.) Simply put, the defeat of these initiatives means less money for education in the near term. Hence, it looks as if we will be traveling down a rocky road for a while and the best we can hope for is that the economy will turn around sooner rather than later. If all else fails, districts can always do what Poway Federation of Teachers in San Diego County did. There, teachers voted to take a small salary cut in order to save jobs -

<http://www3.signonsandiego.com/stories/2009/apr/24/1mc24powcut03590-poway-teachers-ok-pay-cut-fewer-w/?northcounty&zIndex=87891>

The Los Angeles Times has been running a series of hard-hitting articles by Jason Song concerning how difficult it is to get rid of incompetent teachers. In fact, Mr. Song makes the point that ineffective educators almost never lose their positions; the precious few who are fired are let go because they committed immoral and/or criminal acts. These in-depth articles have become great fodder for talk radio, blogs, etc. If you have not read them yet, I urge you to do so. The first two installments can be found here –

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-teachers3-2009may03,0,679507.story>

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-teachers6-2009may06,0,3038809.story>

Immediately preceding the publication of Mr. Song's articles, LAUSD began a process that would simplify the removal of bad teachers -

<http://4lakidsnews.blogspot.com/2009/04/lausd-targets-teacher-shields.html> However, this well-meaning attempt will be fought doggedly by the teachers' unions and will likely never see the light of day.

But, interestingly, Detroit seems to have found something that teachers have done that is so egregious that they are trying to fire 70 of them at once. What heinous crime did these teachers commit? They did not pay their union dues! Please go to the second entry on -

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2009905080348>

In his April 21st Communique, Mike Antonucci posted a document that we had not seen before -- the CTA Organizational Handbook -- <http://www.eiaonline.com/CTAOrganizationalHandbook.pdf> In addition to spelling out the usual (policies concerning teachers' rights, credentialing, curriculum, etc.), the handbook also details their not-so-subtle social agenda -- taking positions on Gay and Lesbian Pride Month, fair housing, hate crimes, international relations and alternatives to military service. Not surprisingly, it is very similar to the NEA handbook - <http://www.nea.org/handbook>

And talking about not-so-subtle social agendas.... Sol Stern has written a very important piece about Paulo Freire in the Spring 2009 edition of City Journal. Perhaps you have never heard of Mr. Freire, but his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which stresses class warfare, has sold over a million copies and is a staple in our schools of education. To read more, go to http://www.city-journal.org/2009/19_2_freirian-pedagogy.html

One of the shibboleths of modern education is that smaller classes lead to better educated students. In a recent article, economist David Reaume takes issue with this line of thinking - <http://www.adn.com/money/story/772976.html>

To say that the high school drop-out problem is serious is a great understatement. Depending on your source, you will find wildly disparate statistics on this issue. Dr. Alan Bonsteel, president of California Parents for Educational Choice points out how politicized these numbers have become and then sets the record straight. Please go to http://www.dailynews.com/editorial/ci_12372595

In any event, if you enjoy these letters, please pass them along to your colleagues. We know that there are many independent teachers in California who are looking for alternative sources of information.

If you would like to see us address certain issues, topics, etc. in these newsletters or on our website – www.ctenhome.org - please let us know. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand, President