



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

June 15, 2010

Dear Colleague,

As the 2009-2010 school year grinds to a close, it is apparent that the recession has taken a toll on education and educators – layoffs, cuts in salaries, larger class sizes, loss of music and arts programs have become part of the diminishing landscape for teachers and students at all levels. And there are many different opinions as to when the economy will turn around.

At this time, it does not look like the federal bail out is going to happen. And in Los Angeles, a \$100 per year parcel tax for education was on the ballot, but couldn't muster the two thirds vote needed for passage. The good news is that, as usual, the massive layoffs predicted by CTA don't appear to be realistic. Mike Antonucci, in his June 10 blog, says that many of the reduction in force notices that went out a few months ago have been rescinded with more retractions to come. For additional info, go to <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2010/06/10/99-bottles-of-beer-on-the-wall/>

We are now starting to see political leaders standing up to some of the excessive demands of the teachers' unions. Most notably, New Jersey governor Chris Christie has spelled things out very clearly in two recent brief videos well worth watching. Here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aw0aBkt8CPA> we see the governor tell a teacher that if the \$83,000+ she makes a year isn't enough, that she should perhaps seek a different line of work. And here - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ksLlAi3iIc&feature=player_embedded - he addresses forced unionism amongst other things. He explicitly states that his problems are not with the teachers in NJ, but rather with their union.

Nearly two years ago, the state Court of Appeals in Michigan, ruled that school districts could not provide payroll deductions for the Michigan Education Association's political action committee. The law is being challenged now and will soon wind up in the state Supreme Court. To read more go to <http://www.detnews.com/article/20100608/OPINION01/6080325/1008/?source=nletter-news> If upheld, it will be on a par with the law in Utah and the recent Texas ruling - which was the basis of our latest poll question. The results of that poll were emailed to you last week and were very one-sided to say the least. About 95% of respondents were very much in favor of the Texas and Utah decisions.

Can we replicate Texas and Utah here in CA? An initiative that would have brought us to that point was filed but couldn't garner enough signatures this past spring. But I have it on good authority that the initiative will be revived in 2011, to be voted on in 2012. Please stay tuned.

One way many districts are saving money is by going to a four day week. There are 120 districts across the country which have gone to 4 days and very interestingly, in those districts test scores have risen and teacher and student attendance has improved. No one is suggesting doing this nationwide at this time – there hasn't been enough research - but it seems that there will be more experimentation in this area in the near future. To learn more, go to <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/06/04/schools-switching-day-weeks-save-money-amid-sluggish-economy/?test=latestnews>

The merit pay or pay-for-performance argument rages on. Some are opposed to any form of merit pay, while others think it a good idea. Within the latter group, there are many different ideas about how to implement such a program. In the May 23 South Florida Sun Sentinel, education researcher Dan Goldhaber weighs in. He thinks that entire schools, not individual teachers should be rewarded. To read Dr. Goldhaber's article, go to http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2010-05-23/news/fl-tricol-principal-education-outlook-20100523_1_dan-goldhaber-teachers-students-and-parents

And yet again, there is more news about the looming public employee pension reform. Governor Schwarzenegger and CA State Senator Dennis Hollingswoth spell out the problems in a recent op-ed in the Sacramento Bee - <http://www.fresnobee.com/2010/05/27/1949324/arnold-schwarzenegger-and-dennis.html> For a detailed narrative of the problem from the state's Legislative Analyst's Office, please go to http://www.lao.ca.gov/laoapp/budgetlist/PublicSearch.aspx?Section_Number=0&Department_Number=1920&KeyCol=235

In any event, if you enjoy these letters, please pass them along to your colleagues. We know that there are many independent-minded 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 – <http://www.ctenhome.org/> - please let us know.

Some of you have asked and yes, we do send out the newsletter in July and August. We will certainly do our best to update you on any important educational issues. As such, even if you are traveling this summer, please try to stay in touch. Thanks -- and have a great summer!

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President