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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 10, 2011

MEDIA ADVISORY – AVAILABILITY FOR COMMENT

24-YEAR VETERAN LAUSD SCHOOL TEACHER WITH ALTERNATE PLAN THAT CHALLENGES CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION’S “STATE OF EMERGENCY” DEMONSTRATIONS PLANNED THIS WEEK

LARRY SAND, PRESIDENT OF THE CALIFORNIA TEACHERS EMPOWERMENT NETWORK, AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATION INFORMATION RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC OFFERS DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON BUDGET CRISIS

WHO: Larry Sand, President, California Teachers Empowerment Network (www.ctenhome.org)

Sand is a recently retired 28-year veteran public school teacher, who taught in New York and Los Angeles. Sand and his teacher-colleagues at CTEN regularly challenge teachers unions on a variety of issues – **CTEN represents many rank-and-file teachers whose voices are often co-opted by union leadership, on one side, and district leadership, on the other side, but who may not agree with the union or the district’s attitudes on a variety of subjects, including wage hikes, class size, lay-offs, taxes and various education reform efforts.** CTEN is a non-partisan, non-political group dedicated to providing teachers in CA and nationwide with reliable and balanced information about professional affiliations and positions on educational issues, information teachers will often not get from their school districts or unions.

WHY: Sand offers an alternate perspective to CTA’s narrative concerning budget cuts from within the teaching community. The 325,000 member California Teachers Association, which is the powerful state affiliate of the National Education Association has declared a “state of emergency,” and has planned a week long series of demonstrations for the week of May 9th. Sand argues that teachers are not, in fact, the victims that CTA is portraying them to be in the current budget crisis and that the good news is that there are many other ways to restore money to education and save teachers jobs without raising taxes.

- 1. Dismantle the archaic seniority system that disregards teaching quality when staffing decisions are made.** If we must lose some teachers, why not let the poorest performers go first? Eric Hanushek, an economist and Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, says that eliminating only 7% of bottom performing teachers would dramatically improve education outcomes. Yes, class sizes would increase slightly, but children would be in larger classes with better teachers. Not a bad trade off -- along with a substantial savings in salaries no longer paid. In fact, there is no evidence that there is an appreciable difference in student performance whether a child is in a class of 22 or 25. According to the New York Times’ Economix blog, “American schools aren’t really much more crowded than educational institutions in other developed

countries. An average of 23.1 students fill the typical American primary school classroom, which is just above the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (O.E.C.D.) average of 21.4 students. In lower secondary schools, the average American class size is 24.3 students, compared with 23.9 across the O.E.C.D.” The blog notes that the O.E.C.D. data indicates “that some of the countries with [some of the world’s highest achieving student bodies](#) — like Korea and Japan — have the biggest class sizes”.

2. **Stop over-hiring teachers.** When economic times are good, school districts prodded by the unions use any enhanced revenues to hire more teachers. Of course when the economic cycle goes south, and the extra revenue disappears, many of those who were hired during boom times will have to be let go. According to the California state Ed-Data website, in Los Angeles in 1998-1999 there were 33,847 teachers for 695,885 kids. By 2008-2009 the number of teachers swelled to 38,367 while the number of students declined to 687,534. So Los Angeles gained over 4,500 teachers while losing over 8,000 students. Similarly, according to the Wall Street Journal, in New York City between 2000 and 2009 the city added 7,000 teachers while enrollment was down 63,000 students. Teacher union watch dog <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2010/05/13/the-sound-of-eyes-opening/> Mike Antonucci reports that in Ohio from 2000-2008 the number of teachers increased by over 17% while the student population shrank by almost 7%. [Antonucci](#) further points out that the higher expenses don’t end with teachers’ salaries and benefits. “Most school districts employ about two non-teachers for every three teachers. If you hire more teachers, you also typically have to hire more support employees.”
3. **Support the proliferation of charter schools.** CTA says that studies show that charters do no better than traditional public schools. Yes, a few studies do, but others contend that charters indeed do better... some a lot better. But even if there is no difference, charters are funded at about 60 cents on the dollar compared to traditional public schools, thus saving the taxpayers large sums of money.
4. **Establish a system of school choice where education money follows the child to the public or private school of a parent’s choosing.** School choice will give poor children a chance to get out of failing schools **and** save the taxpayer money at the same time. Most private schools offer a good education at a lower cost than public schools.
5. **Change the teachers’ retirement system from its current defined benefit to a defined contribution plan.** A 401k type plan for retirement would put the responsibility for teachers’ retirement on the individual teacher, not the taxpayer. Marcia Fritz, president of the California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility recently wrote that “California taxpayers would save billions of dollars that would flow to public schools, community colleges and universities if state and local public employees retired with benefits comparable to those provided to employees of Silicon Valley's top companies. Teachers' jobs would be saved and school programs spared.”

6. **Eliminate permanence and make it easier to fire incompetent teachers.** It shouldn't take several years and hundreds of thousands of dollars to *maybe* get rid of one rotten apple. Currently, after just two years on the job, a teacher who doesn't do anything short of committing a felony is granted permanence – essentially a job for life.

While the CTA has declared a “state of emergency” the most powerful union in the state will not give an inch on any real reform that would improve education while saving taxpayer dollars. Will beleaguered Californians finally awaken and tell CTA that their demagoguery no longer works and that other solutions to the state's fiscal problems must be implemented?

Larry Sand/CTEN - Background Information

Larry Sand began his teaching career in New York in 1971. Since 1984, he has taught elementary school as well as English, math, history and ESL in the Los Angeles Unified School District, where he also served as a Title 1 Coordinator. Recently retired, he is the president of the non-profit California Teachers Empowerment Network – www.ctenhome.org - a non-partisan, non-political group dedicated to providing teachers with reliable and balanced information about professional affiliations and positions on educational issues – information teachers will often not get from their school districts or unions.

CTEN was formed in 2006 because a wide range of information from the more global concerns of education policy, education leadership, and education reform, to information having a more personal application, such as professional liability insurance, options of relationships to teachers unions, and the effect of unionism on teacher pay, comes to teachers from entities that have a specific agenda.

Sand has participated in several panel discussions and events focusing on education reform efforts and the impact of teachers unions on public education. In March 2010, Sand participated in a debate hosted by the non-profit Intelligence Squared, an organization that regularly hosts Oxford-style debates, which was nationally broadcast on Bloomberg TV and NPR, as well as covered by *Newsweek*. Sand and his teammates -- Terry Moe of the Hoover Institution and former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige, opposed the proposition - *Don't Blame Teachers Unions For Our Failing Schools*. The pro-union team included Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. Sand has also worked with other organizations to present accurate information about the relationship between teachers and their unions, most recently assisting in the production of a video for the *Center for Union Facts* in which a group of teachers speak truthfully about the teachers unions.

Sand's comments and op-eds have appeared in *City Journal*, *Associated Press*, *Newsweek*, *Townhall Magazine*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Diego Union Tribune*, *Los Angeles Daily News* and other publications. He has appeared on numerous broadcast news programs in Southern California and nationally.

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