



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

*Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues*

*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.*

October 19, 2016

Dear Colleague,

There are a load of education bills that became law in California at the end of last month, as well as quite a few that failed. AB 2329, one of the more interesting bills that passed, involves laying the groundwork to expand computer education in all grades. Another, AB 2246, mandates that “school districts serving 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to adopt a suicide prevention policy that specifically addresses prevention procedures for youth who are at high risk of mental health issues and suicidal thinking, including those who are bereaved, homeless, experiencing discrimination based on sexual orientation or struggling with substance abuse.”

One bill of note that died in the legislature, AB 2835, would have required school districts and other employers of public employee unions “to hold annual in-person orientations for all new workers, at which unions would be allowed to make a 30-minute pitch for union membership.” Another high-profile bill that didn’t make it (Governor Brown vetoed it), was AB 2548 which would have given the legislature “a role in overseeing the new statewide school accountability system, based on multiple measures of school success, by locking in statute the work that the State Board of Education is doing on its own through rules and regulations. It would have placed more emphasis on test scores for identifying low-performing schools needing assistance than the state board favors, and it would require a summary ranking of a school’s performance, enabling parents to readily compare schools – a position the state board opposes.”

To see the entire scorecard assembled by *EdSource*’s John Fensterwald, go to <https://edsources.org/2016/key-education-bills-still-alive-and-some-that-arent/568119>

And speaking of accountability, an educator in Los Angeles penned a thoughtful piece on the matter for *LA School Report*. Tunji Adebayo, a high school charter teacher who made his case before the state school board in Sacramento, writes,

*...I told the board that we need an accountability system that will provide families with clarity and equity. I spoke about Marco’s mom, who works multiple jobs and has half the eighth-grade education Marco has achieved. Marco’s little sister once translated his mother’s question to me,*

*“What high school should Marco go to?” An equitable accountability system is one where Marco’s mom could easily understand the performance of schools in her district to make the right educational choice for her son.*

*I also told them about my mentee Jayson’s mother, who deserves to know that the school he attends potentially performs in the bottom 20 to 30 percent of schools statewide. An equitable system would give her the tools and information to help her steer her son to greater educational opportunity.*

To continue reading, go to <http://laschoolreport.com/commentary-need-accountability-system-will-clearly-communicate-schools/>

The teacher shortage issue seems to be a rumor that just won’t die. Responding to the latest lamentation from the Learning Policy Institute, Mike Antonucci deftly refuted it. While he agrees that there are shortages in certain areas, he writes that the national teacher shortage story is nonsense. In fact, Antonucci asserts that there is a teacher surplus in elementary education. “If you aren’t specific in identifying shortage areas and providing incentives to fill those areas, the result may be an unneeded increase in elementary school teacher candidates who cannot find jobs.”

To read the Learning Policy Institute report, go to <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/coming-crisis-teaching> To read what Antonucci has to say on the issue, go to <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2016/09/23/dan-goldhaber-for-secretary-of-education-and-labor/> and <https://www.the74million.org/article/analysis-new-warnings-of-teacher-shortage-sound-like-deja-vu-all-over-again> Also, National Council on Teacher Quality president Kate Walsh makes excellent points on the topic here - <http://www.nctq.org/commentary/article.do?id=293>

On the school choice front, the Nevada Supreme Court delivered a split decision on the state’s universal Education Savings Account program. The ACLU had argued the law was unconstitutional, on the grounds of separation of church and state, alleging that the program would unconstitutionally divert money to religious schools that proselytize or can discriminate against students or staff. The Court denied that claim, but did rule that the legislature can’t use money earmarked for public education to fund it. So the ESA program remains on hold pending the state’s lawmakers’ effort to find a different funding mechanism. To learn more about Nevada’s ESA law, go here - <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/oct/05/in-wake-of-esa-ruling-funding-issue-looms-large/>

At the end of September, the American Federation of Teachers filed its 2015-2016 financial report with the U.S. Department of Labor, and once again, it spent a lot of teachers’ dues money on the Clintons. As reported by RiShawn Biddle,

*The union gave \$250,000 to the Bill, Hillary, and Chelsea Clinton Foundation, the controversial philanthropy run by the Clinton family that has garnered widespread scrutiny during this year’s presidential campaign for receiving donations from corporations and foreign governments that also had business before the former Secretary of State during her tenure in the Obama Administration. AFT gave another \$250,000 to the Clinton Global Initiative....*

*Altogether, AFT has doled out \$2.2 million into Clinton-controlled nonprofits over the past four years.*

The question then becomes: Is the AFT categorizing this as “political spending?” In other words does an agency fee payer have to pony up for what would seem to be a blatant political contribution? The best way to find out the funding source of the Clinton donations would be to check out a Hudson notice. **If you are an AFT/CFT member and have a recent Hudson notice, please contact me at [lsand@ctenhome.org](mailto:lsand@ctenhome.org)** To read Biddle’s commentary on the AFT report go to <http://dropoutnation.net/2016/09/29/aft-spends-big-on-hillary/> To delve into the report itself, go here - [http://rishawnbiddle.org/outsidereports/aft\\_2016\\_dol\\_filing.htm](http://rishawnbiddle.org/outsidereports/aft_2016_dol_filing.htm)

Also on the union front, an interesting point was raised in another bill that didn’t get passed into law during the 2015-1016 legislative session. AB 2754 would have required “public unions to hold an election every two years to determine if the current labor union should continue to represent its members. The election would also allow workers to select another public employee union to take its place.” This seems only fair since probably not one person reading this email voted to be in the union that represents them. An excellent paper on the subject was written in 2012 by the Heritage Foundation’s James Sherk. He looked at several states to see how many teachers still employed voted in their union.

*Florida passed legislation giving government unions collective bargaining powers in 1974, and by 1975 the state’s 10 largest school districts had unionized. Just 1 percent of current teachers were on the job in 1975. Fully 99 percent of the teachers in Florida’s largest school districts had no choice about being represented by their union.*

*Michigan gave government unions collective bargaining powers in 1965. Seven of the 10 largest school districts in the state had already unionized (even without full collective bargaining powers) before then or organized that year. One of the state’s largest school districts unionized in 1971, and two others did so in the 1980s. Across Michigan’s 10 largest school districts, just 1 percent of teachers had the opportunity to decide who would represent them.*

To read Sherk’s report, go to <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/08/unelected-unions-why-workers-should-be-allowed-to-choose-their-representatives>

By the way, if you are looking to start a “local only” teachers union with no ties to NEA/CTA or AFT/CFT, please contact Rafael Ruano for help in doing so. If you’d like more information, go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/california-independent-teachers.html>

And on the subject of unions, a reminder: **now is the time for agency fee payers to claim their rebate.** Or if you are a full-dues payer but want to withhold the political share of your union dues, now is the time to get busy. Existing CTA fee payers have until November 15<sup>th</sup> to request your refund. For details, go here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/how-to-opt-out-teachers-union-nea-cta-aft-cft.html>

If you are still using a school email to receive these newsletters, please consider sending us your personal email address. More and more school districts are blocking CTEN. In any event, if you

enjoy these letters and find them to be informative, please pass them along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

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.

Sincerely,  
Larry Sand  
CTEN President