



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

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

November 18, 2008

Dear Colleague,

The past month has been a most interesting one. We have elected a new President, effected change to the political landscape by voting yea or nay on a myriad of initiatives and saw the state economic picture deteriorate considerably. On a more personal level, it has been a very interesting month for CTEN. We have had an unprecedented number of teachers sign up with us in the last 30 days and would like to welcome those of you to our organization.

While the political ramifications from the election remain to be seen, one thing is most tangible - California's economy is going through some very bad times. School districts all over the state will certainly be affected by mid-year cuts of one sort or another. All we teachers can do in this situation is monitor the situation very closely and do our best to make sure the money we make is invested in a prudent way. In our September letter, we talked about 403b's, tax deferred retirement plans available to employees of educational institutions, but it seems worthwhile to mention them again. We would urge all teachers to take a close look at this option and visit our links page where you will see the first entry is 403bwise - <http://www.403bwise.com/> It is an excellent site which will help you navigate your way through these tricky waters.

We have learned of a website that many teachers have come to utilize called edhelper.com. It has a wide-ranging array of K-12 support materials - some free and some for a small fee. Please check them out at <http://www.edhelper.com/> Also, many of you have your own favorite online places to go for help, support, materials, etc. If you would like to share these with your colleagues, please let us know and we will include them in a future newsletter.

As mentioned above, it has been a busy time for us. In the middle of October, the CTA contributed \$1 million (in addition to a previous \$250,000 gift) to the No-on-Prop. 8 campaign. This large donation to a cause unrelated to education became a national news item. I alluded to this story in an op-ed in the LA Times a few days later - <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-sand18-2008oct18,0,2528432.story>

We also alerted teachers to the donation in a mass email sent out shortly after that. The fallout was palpable. Great numbers of teachers emailed and called us and the message

was amazingly consistent - outrage over money being spent by a teachers' union on an issue unrelated to education. (The hefty amount of the donation only exacerbated the anger.) While the CTA has been doing this sort of thing for quite some time, it apparently was news to many. If you are interested in learning just where teachers' unions spend their members' dues, please go to the Department of Labor's website <http://erds.dol-esa.gov/query/getOrgQry.do> For a site that is a little easier to navigate, The Center For Responsive Politics offers <http://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/summary.php?ID=D000000064> And for a plain old list, Mike Antonucci offers this in his January 22, 2008 *Communique* - <http://www.eiaonline.com/archives/20080122.htm>

The upshot of all this is that a great many teachers have decided to become agency fee payers or religious objectors. We have had a very busy month at CTEN corresponding with teachers who are seeking advice on how to change their union status. If you fall into this category and have questions, need assistance, etc., please visit our website <http://www.ctenhome.org/> and specifically the page that deals with Union Membership Options -- <http://www.ctenhome.org/knowMembership.htm> You will find everything you need to know there - sample agency fee letters, whom to send them to, advice on maintaining liability coverage, etc. And of course, if you have any questions, we are here to provide you with accurate information that you might not be able to find elsewhere.

Additionally, President of the CTA, David Sanchez, apparently feeling some pressure to explain the recent extravagant union spending decided to address the issue and at the same time take a few shots at CTEN in a letter written to union chapter presidents on October 24 - [http://www.talb.org/DSanchez\\_Email\\_Presidents\\_Prop8.pdf](http://www.talb.org/DSanchez_Email_Presidents_Prop8.pdf)

We would like to take this opportunity to address Mr. Sanchez's comments about CTEN.

Mr. Sanchez says, "The California Teachers Empowerment Network, which is supported by National Right to Work...." Well, yes and no. It depends what he means by support. Does he mean financial support? If so, the answer is a resounding "No." If he means that we occasionally refer teachers to NRTW who are having trouble with their union, the answer is, "Yes." NRTW is linked on our website - no secret there.

Mr. Sanchez says, "You or some of your members may have received an email from CTEN encouraging people to resign from CTA." This is a blatant half-truth. The exact line from that email was, "*If you find that CTA doesn't represent your views, you should consider resigning from the union.*"

Mr. Sanchez says, "This (CTEN) is the same group that organized in support of the anti-teacher and anti-union initiatives that were soundly defeated in 2005." Clearly, Mr. Sanchez has not done his homework. He is alluding to Props. 74 and 75 which were on the ballot in November of 2005. CTEN did not become an entity until 2006. And while we are at it, we find it interesting that he would consider Prop. 75 "anti-teacher." We think it was most definitely pro-teacher. Prop. 75 sought to get the permission of teachers before taking money from their paychecks for political purposes.

Mr. Sanchez, of course has every right to disapprove of the work we do. However, we would appreciate if he were a little more truthful in his comments.

CTEN is only as strong as its support. Here are a few things that can help strengthen our organization-

- Please forward this email to three teachers whom you think might be interested in receiving information from us
- We are planning an informational conference call later this month. If you are interested in joining it, please let us know and we will get you the particulars.
- If you know of a group of teachers who might be interested in what we are doing, we would be happy to come to your area and talk with them. As we are all working teachers, weekends would be best for this type of meeting.

And finally, as a semi-regular feature, we send out the following brief questionnaire. If you are new to this list, please fill it out and return via email. If you have seen this before and did not respond to it for whatever reason, but would like to do so now, please do.

Please indicate how you would like CTEN to address your interests/ concerns by replying to this email, answering "yes" or "no" to the following statements.

1. I am interested in the general information currently provided on the CTEN email list and website. [Yes/No] If this is the only question to which you answer, "Yes," you will simply remain on the CTEN email list. In any case, your email address will be kept confidential unless we have your permission to share it.

2. I would like email updates on local information. (Your email address will be shared with local CTEN leaders if you answer, "Yes.") [Yes/No] If you say, "Yes," please give us the district where you teach so you can be placed on a local leadership email list.

3. For purposes of feeling connected to and communicating with other like-minded teachers in my local area, I would like local CTEN leaders to share my email address with others who wish the same. [Yes/No] Please let us know the district where you teach to help us with your general location.

4. I would consider volunteering to fill a CTEN role or participate in a local or online CTEN project. (If you answer, "Yes," you will receive a future email detailing some of the ways CTEN could benefit from your help.) [Yes/No]

And finally, please visit our website - <http://www.ctenhome.org/> We try to update it regularly. If you have something that you would like to see on our website that is not currently there, please let us know and we will try to accommodate you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand, President