



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

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

December 16, 2008

Dear Colleague,

As the holidays near, it is an anxious time for many of us in California. Our state's economy is swimming in red ink and very possibly will be for some time to come. What that might mean for many teachers is pay cuts, larger classes, loss of some health care benefits, etc.

While no one is expected to be happy about losing money and benefits, it seems to us that we may well have to give up something somewhere. The unions will say that teachers should not give up anything, and that the state is "trying to balance the budget on the backs of students and teachers." The districts will say they have no choice but to cut teachers' salaries and benefits, while at the same time protecting bloated government bureaucracies. Hence, it is imperative that you do your best to dig out the facts and not just take as gospel what either your district or union tells you. Each side has a vested interest in this situation and you may not be part of their concern.

We at CTEN do have a proposal. We think that every school district in the state should trim down its bureaucracy to minimal levels before affecting classroom teachers and students. We also think that teachers' union dues which average close to \$1,000 a year in California should be cut. We will ask the CTA and CFT to refund all monies not spent on teachers' issues (e.g. political spending), to teachers. This would give the average teacher about a \$300 hundred rebate. The unions are always preaching about unity and loyalty. We think it's about time they practice what they preach.

One final word on our budget situation – Dan Walters recently wrote an article in the Sacramento Bee in which he lays at least part of our financial woes at the feet of the CTA and a deal it made with former governor, Gray Davis, in 2000. To read this article go to - <http://www.sacbee.com/391/story/1416220.html>

The recent tragic events in Mumbai are a solemn reminder of the dangerous times in which we live. The question for teachers is just how we broach the subject with our students. If our dumbed down and politically correct textbooks are any indication, the answer is to avoid the subject completely. For some time now, we have had links to a couple of textbook watchdog groups on our website -- <http://www.textbooktrust.org/index.htm> and <http://www.historytextbooks.org/index.htm>

From the latter site, we think the following is well worth reading at this time --  
<http://www.historytextbooks.org/islam.htm>

For anyone unhappy with the status quo and desirous of real education reform, perhaps the first place to look is Washington D.C. where chancellor of schools, Michelle Rhee, has some very innovative ideas about how to deal with the tenure issue. You may or may not agree with the following, but we are certain that you will find it provocative --  
[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122731062221349277.html?mod=todays\\_us\\_opinion](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122731062221349277.html?mod=todays_us_opinion)

Several of you have asked us about the merits of National Board Certification. While we don't have a position on NBC, if any of you have gone through the process and would like to share your experience, we would be happy to include it in a future newsletter. To learn more about NBC, go to -- <http://www.nbpts.org/>

Also, in the near future we will be making some changes to our website – [www.ctenhome.org](http://www.ctenhome.org) If you have any ideas about content or how to make it more user-friendly, please send them along.

And finally, we at CTEN wish you and your families the happiest of holidays. See you in January.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand