



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

February 17, 2009

Dear Colleague,

The lead stories in both our December and January letters focused on the deteriorating economic situation in California. And amazingly, as there is not yet a budget as of this writing, it will be our lead story yet again. The situation gets dicier by the day as school districts still can only guess who and/or what will be cut. In Los Angeles, home of the biggest and messiest school district in the state, the picture indeed looks grim with layoffs and a teachers strike possible. (A bit of good news here - a health care deal was reached last week between LAUSD and UTLA, thus eliminating one of the major issues.)

In our January newsletter, <http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/CTENLTL1-09.pdf> we made some suggestions as to how the budget situation could be dealt with. We realize every school district is different and each has its own ideas about what can be done away with. We would urge all teachers to look at as much data as possible and come to their own conclusion as to what the best course of action would be. (Visits to school board meetings can be very informative.) We also urge you all to be on the lookout for the all too frequent protecting of bureaucrats, especially in the larger districts, and union demagoguery in general. A good case in point about the latter would be something that UTLA President A.J. Duffy said recently. In trying to make a case for his teachers, he claimed that Los Angeles placed 45th out of 49 school districts in average teacher pay. Other than not being true, it also brings to light the bogus notion of *average teacher pay*. As an example, LA might have to lay off over 2,000 of its newest hires. If this scenario becomes a reality, the average pay of LA teachers would climb considerably, having knocked off 2,000 of the lowest salaries in the district. If instead, a projected early retirement incentive works out and 2,000 veteran teachers leave, then maybe there will be no need to lay off the rookies. In this scenario, the average teacher pay would go down. In any event, as you can readily see – average pay is a meaningless statistic and is used by those in power to score points, not to enlighten teachers or the general public.

Several months ago, the CTA created quite a stir by giving the *No on Prop. 8* campaign a \$1,000,000 gift on top of a previous \$250,000 gift and were chastised by many for doing so. It seemed that many people awoke to the fact the teachers' unions spend much of their members' dues on causes unrelated to education. Apparently, CTA is unchastened, as in mid-January they filed an amicus brief in which they hope to undo the vote of the people who voted in November to maintain the traditional definition of marriage. (See

p. 3 of <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/highprofile/documents/s1680xx-amcur-calteacher-2.pdf>) Additionally, Robert Benincasa just wrote a very interesting article for NPR <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100339693> in which he states that teachers in CA “gave about \$2 to support the marriage ban for every \$1 they gave to oppose it.” This of course suggests a political disconnect between the union hierarchy and rank and file teachers. Nothing new here – union watchdog Mike Antonucci wrote about this phenomenon in 2005. To read his report, please go to <http://www.eiaonline.com/neapyramid.pdf>

A few months ago, several members of CTEN participated in a documentary called *The Truth About Teachers Unions* made by the Center for Union Facts. To see this short video, please go to http://teachersunionexposed.com/video_release.cfm . There have been over 20,500 views to date.

In the December newsletter, we talked about the abysmal state of textbooks today. We recently discovered an excellent new book on the subject, appropriately titled *The Trouble With Textbooks: Distorting History and Religion* by Gary Tobin and Dennis Ybarra. Please check out the book’s website - <http://troublewithtextbooks.org/> This book is highly recommended for all teachers, especially those of you who teach World History.

Given the tax problems of recent presidential appointees, not to mention the machinations of the former governor of Illinois, maybe it’s time to start teaching ethics on a mass scale in the schools. If this is something that interests you, we suggest visiting <http://www.ethicsusa.com/home.cfm> We do not enter the world as moral beings – we are hopefully taught ethics and virtue by our parents. However, as schools act *in loco parentis*, they clearly can help by reinforcing the common tenets of morality.

And for those of you who might want to stay in teaching but not in a traditional public school, we suggest checking out The Center for Educational Reform -- <http://www.edreform.com/> - There is much valuable information there about charters and school choice.

In any event, by the time of our March letter, we at CTEN (all working teachers) sincerely hope that the budget situation will be clearer and that the damage to our profession will be minimal. If you have any questions about how your local district and union are handling things, please don’t hesitate to call on us. We have an extensive network of people who can most likely get you a quick answer. Please visit our website – www.ctenhome.org We will do our best to keep you informed as things develop.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand, President