



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.

February 18, 2015

Dear Colleague,

The latest bad news about pensions comes to us via the National Council on Teacher Quality. "Doing the Math on Teacher Pensions: How to Protect Teachers and Taxpayers" is a state-by-state analysis that challenges the claims of pension boards and other groups about "the cost-effectiveness, fairness and flexibility of the traditional defined benefit pension plans still in place in 38 states." It includes a report card on each of the 50 states and D.C. with a detailed analysis of state teacher pension policies. To access the report, go to http://nctq.org/dmsStage/Doing_the_Math Details on California, rated "C," are here - http://nctq.org/dmsView/Pension_Report_Card_California

EdVoice, a Sacramento based advocacy group, came out with a report in January: "Student Progress Ignored: An examination of California school districts' compliance with the Stull Act." After 40 years of ignoring the law and a lawsuit which was supposed to have changed things, school districts are still not evaluating teachers and principals properly. "Overall, 86.5% of evaluations did not include a connection to pupil progress in their comments. Even in the best district, only 36% of district's teachers had an evaluation that included any mention of pupil progress." To learn more about the original EdVoice lawsuit, go here - <http://www.city-journal.org/2012/cjc0119ls.html> To see the report, go to <http://edvoice.org/sites/default/files/STUDENT%20PROGRESS%20IGNORED.pdf>

The debate about testing has become one of the most talked about subjects in education circles. Moderate voices are not always heard, but Teach Plus's Celine Coggins suggests a sensible approach.

I know annual testing is being hotly debated by teachers right now, with folks on either side of the issue. I stand with Dwight in support of annual assessments. Without them, I fear that we'll go back in time to 1995, where you couldn't ask the question: What did I do this year to help my students succeed? Without annual testing we cannot be pinpoint-focused on closing the achievement gap.

To read her entire statement, go to

<http://cm.teachplus.org/t/ViewEmail/r/83FC0043058C2FD12540EF23F30FEDED/39A765B280D914F1148F9D201EEB5695>

The National Education Association has hired a couple of communications firms to help bolster its image with the public. Over at the *Daily Beast*, Conor Williams has unearthed and posted the formerly internal communiqué. He writes,

The document, titled 'Persuading the People on Public Schools,' lists a series of educational and political buzzwords and offers euphemisms of varying degrees of synonymy. Instead of 'inequality,' the NEA suggests 'living in the right ZIP Code.'

This is odd: Those 'right' ZIP Codes are usually full of families on the wealthy side of America's growing inequality gap. How can we talk about ZIP Codes without discussing inequality? It's also ironic, given the union's usual resistance to school-choice policies (often involving charter schools) that would weaken links between high real-estate prices and access to quality schools.

Williams' piece and the document itself can be accessed here –

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/02/02/union-to-teachers-say-right-zip-code-not-rich.html>

Friedrichs v. CTA, the Center for Individual Rights challenge to compulsory union dues, is one step closer to the Supreme Court. CIR informs us that on January 26th, “Michael Carvin, lead counsel in the case, filed a petition for writ of *certiorari* with the Supreme Court. The petition asks the Court to take the case and rule that the compulsory union dues laws now in effect in twenty-six states unconstitutionally force individuals to subsidize union positions with which they may fundamentally disagree. If the Court takes *Friedrichs*, it will likely schedule the case for the term beginning October, 2015, with a decision likely by June 2016.” To learn more and read the petition, go to <https://www.cir-usa.org/cases/friedrichs-v-california-teachers-association-et-al/>

In Illinois, Governor Bruce Rauner apparently decided not to wait for the SCOTUS to rule on the *Friedrichs* case, and issued an executive order barring unions from forcing public employees to pay dues.

(T)he newly elected Republican who has often criticized public sector unions, took his first step toward curbing their power on Monday by announcing an executive order that would bar unions from requiring all state workers to pay the equivalent of dues.

Mr. Rauner, who faces a Democratic-controlled legislature with strong ties to labor, took the unilateral step saying that he believed those fees violate the United States Constitution.

'Forced union dues are a critical cog in the corrupt bargain that is crushing taxpayers,' Mr. Rauner said. 'An employee who is forced to pay unfair share dues is being forced to fund political activity with which they disagree. That is a clear violation of First Amendment rights — and something that, as governor, I am duty bound to correct.'

This will be interesting to watch. If Rauner's decision stands, will other governors try to follow suit? To read more, go here - <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/10/us/illinois-governor-bruce-rauner-acts-to-curb-power-of-public-sector-unions.html>

On the national stage, Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) is pushing for a school choice bill that would help children with disabilities, provide more choices to military families and expanded educational options for low-income families in Washington, DC. To learn more about the CHOICE Act, go to <http://www.scott.senate.gov/issue/choice-act> To get a varied view on why choice, in general, is beneficial, go here - <http://amplifyschoolchoice.com/expert-opinions/>

This coming June and July, the Independent Institute is hosting “Challenge of Liberty,” a free market seminar for students who are at least 18 years old.

*The five-day series of lectures, readings, films, multimedia presentations, and debates teach participants what economics is, how it affects their lives, and how understanding it can help them achieve better lives for themselves, their communities, and the world at large. **Challenge of Liberty** illuminates the intimate connection between principles of free market economics and public policy decisions. Informative, inspiring, and fun, **Challenge of Liberty** is an ideal way stay intellectually engaged over the summer while bolstering your personal network and building your skill set.*

To learn more, go to <http://www.independent.org/students/seminars/>

Know anyone who is interested in becoming a member of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing?

There is a Public Member vacancy on the Committee of Credentials. By statute, the committee is responsible for initiating all investigations into allegations of misconduct by credential holders and applicants. To serve in the Public Member position on the COC, applicants may not have been employed in either a certificated public school position and/or have been a member of any governing board of a school district or county board of education within the five years prior to the date of appointment. Applications must be postmarked no later than May 29, 2015. Visit the CTC website (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/>) for additional information and a copy of the application.

On March 3rd an election in Los Angeles will, among other things, determine 4 seats on the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees. Four people are running for Seat 1, including CTEN supporter Mark Isler. At the end of this email, I will paste in info that we have received from Isler and the other candidates who are running. (Just to set the record straight, as a 501(c)(3) CTEN cannot, and is not, endorsing anyone for the post.)

If you are interested in giving CTEN brochures to colleagues, you can print them right from the home page - <http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/CTEN - Brochure.pdf> Or, if you prefer, we will be happy to send you as many preprinted ones as you need.

Also, anyone wishing to donate to CTEN can do so very simply through check, money order or PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.html> As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity of others. Thanks, as always.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President

Candidates for Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees:

Mark Isler - <http://www.markisler.com/>

I am running to reverse a long decline in the quality and performance of our educational system. Too many students graduate from high school who can't read, write, spell, or even fill out a job application so the community colleges have had to make up for the failure of the lower grades.

Our community colleges spend too much time and money providing programs and classes that don't translate into marketable skills and true opportunities. My mission will be to challenge schools to provide programs and degrees that translate into jobs and opportunities.

*We need to go back to **high standards, high expectations, and strong discipline**. One of the best ways to achieve these results is by providing **school choice**. With competition, the public schools will get much better, but we need to redefine public schools as schools the public chooses, be they public, charter, private or home schools.*

Andra Hoffman - andra@andrahoffman4laccd.com

I have 17 years of experience as a community college educator. I currently work at a local community college as a Professor in the Political Science and Business Divisions; I also run the Job Placement Center where I place students in jobs and internships both on and off campus, and I am the Government Relations liaison to the college. Every year I bring students, faculty and staff to Sacramento to lobby the legislature and teach them how to advocate for issues that matter. I have seen first hand what our community colleges can do to improve the lives of those who walk through our doors. I've also seen underprepared and underserved populations struggle to be successful in college. I am running because I want to remove barriers and make sure that all students regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status have an opportunity to benefit from an affordable, high quality public higher education.

Francesca Vega - <http://www.francescavega.com/> (Statement solicited; none received.)

Maria "Sokie" Quintero - <http://www.sokie4laccd.com/> (Statement solicited; none received.)