



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

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

March 17, 2011

Dear Colleague,

**Please note that in addition to the traditional emailing of the CTEN monthly newsletter, we will have it posted on the CTEN blog - <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com/> Since there are several controversial issues covered in this letter, we think it would be a good time for people to share their opinions with other teachers.**

The story of the month for educators has to be the dismantling of collective bargaining in Wisconsin. Whether or not you agree with Governor Scott Walker's actions, there is no doubt that is a story that will impact teachers in Wisconsin and possibly have long lasting ramifications for teachers elsewhere. Many other states -- New Jersey, Indiana, Ohio, et al. -- have been watching with more than just passing interest as they are considering similar type legislation. With 29 Republican governors, a sagging economy and general antipathy toward public employee unions, this is a good time for those who think collective bargaining is not healthy for society to put an end to what many in the union think is their "right."

While CTEN is not taking a position on collective bargaining, we can't help but be disappointed in the way many Wisconsin teachers behaved in protesting Governor Walker's actions. They certainly haven't helped their cause with the kind of behavior displayed in this brief video -

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71gsnLfsbbM&feature=player\\_embedded#at=47](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71gsnLfsbbM&feature=player_embedded#at=47)

Another very contentious issue, this one in California, is the Parent Trigger battle underway in Compton. In a nutshell, the Compton parents got the required number of signatures to force a change in school governance, but the school district, the state school board, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, Governor Jerry Brown and various state legislators objected and announced their intention to clarify (read: eviscerate) the new law. However, the landslide of articles sympathetic to the parents from newspapers all over the state has softened the positions of opponents to the point where it would now appear that the law might survive in tact. Here is a bit more information about Parent Trigger from our October newsletter:

*Earlier this year, without much fanfare, a new law went into effect in CA. The "Parent Trigger" could have major ramifications for teachers, parents and students. Under this law,*

*if 50.1 percent of parents at a school sign a petition, the school must initiate one of four turnaround options as prescribed by the federal government. To learn more, go to [http://parentrevolution.org/?page\\_id=7](http://parentrevolution.org/?page_id=7) . Also, the Heartland Institute has put out a policy brief explaining the promise and possible pitfalls of the Parent Trigger - [http://www.heartland.org/custom/semod\\_policybot/pdf/28202.pdf](http://www.heartland.org/custom/semod_policybot/pdf/28202.pdf)*

There is still much confusion about the new law, and CTEN is sponsoring an event in Los Angeles on March 21<sup>st</sup> at which we hope to set the facts straight. We will have four experts discussing the law and its ramifications. For more information, please go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/PT%20Event%20Flyer.pdf>

San Gabriel Valley State Senator Bob Huff is proposing a new law. SB 355 (<http://cssrc.us/web/29/news.aspx?id=10388&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>) would allow California school districts to base teacher layoffs on performance rather than seniority. Needless to say, the state teachers unions will fight this tooth and nail. Seniority as staffing mechanism is at the heart of collective bargaining and is written in the California State Education code. While not dismantling the seniority system in its entirety, it would let local districts determine how they want to handle their own staffing decisions.

In a time when student testing has gotten a very bad name, a new study has emerged which shows that testing actually helps students learn. The study claims that testing and a reading theory developed in 1946 remain great learning tools. To read more, go to <http://www.openeducation.net/2011/01/25/latest-study-validates-testing-forced-retrieval-and-sqrrr/>

In the reasonably near future, you will be getting a special mailing from us - a brief Survey Monkey questionnaire. We would very much appreciate it if all teachers who are on our list would participate. By doing so, you will help CTEN in our efforts to show that there are independent-minded teachers in California and that not all are happily represented by the two state teacher unions here.

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please visit our website – [www.ctenhome.org](http://www.ctenhome.org) regularly. If you any need information that you can't find on the website, please send an email to [cteninfo@ctenhome.org](mailto:cteninfo@ctenhome.org) or call us at 888-290-8471 and we will get back to you in short order.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand  
CTEN President