



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

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

March 20, 2012

*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.*

Dear Colleague,

Until recently, Californians had three different tax hike proposals to look forward to on the November ballot – all promising to help our fiscally strained public school system. But now, it seems that Jerry Brown has worked out a compromise initiative. Details are still sketchy, but here are a couple of links that will shine some light on the issue - [http://cbp.org/pdfs/2012/CaliforniaBudgetBites/120306\\_tax\\_comparison.pdf](http://cbp.org/pdfs/2012/CaliforniaBudgetBites/120306_tax_comparison.pdf) and <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/california-politics/2012/03/jerry-brown-tax-compromise-millionaires.html>

Two very interesting reports on school choice have emerged in the last month. One deals with Milwaukee, which has the oldest voucher program in the country. The study's press release states, "Students enrolled in the Milwaukee voucher program are more likely to graduate from high school and go to college than their public school counterparts, boast significantly improved reading scores, represent a more diverse cross-section of the city, and are improving the results of traditional public school students." To read more, go to [http://www.uaedreform.org/SCDP/Milwaukee\\_Research.html](http://www.uaedreform.org/SCDP/Milwaukee_Research.html) In North Carolina, the results of a study were released which show that giving public school students a choice as to which public school they can go to dramatically lowers the crime rate. Interestingly, the choices in this study are limited to traditional public schools – no charters schools or vouchers are involved. To read more, go to <http://educationnext.org/does-school-choice-reduce-crime/>

When Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker outlawed collective bargaining for teachers, he set off a firestorm of criticism from teachers unions and others in Wisconsin. Now there is a report that examines what has transpired since Walker's controversial move. "Wisconsin school districts have realized significant savings either through the implementation of collective bargaining changes or the threat of them, according to an analysis by the Michigan-based Education Action Group Foundation, known as EAG, a nonprofit research organization promoting school spending reform." For more, go to <http://www.wisconsinreporter.com/impact-of-an-act-new-report-finds-big-benefits-in-wis-act-10>

Is your school district using any digital textbooks yet? They will be soon if Apple has anything to do with it. Cheaper in the long run, they will undoubtedly be with us at some point. - <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2012/01/19/apple-unveils-digital-textbook-e-publishing-platform>

While we are on the subject of digital learning, Sal Khan, the guru of the flipped classroom, was again featured recently on *60 Minutes*. Even if you are familiar with Khan, this brief video is worthwhile as it reveals some amazing statistics about what this amazing man has accomplished in a few short years on the scene. To see the video, go to [www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7401696n](http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7401696n)

In Colorado, many teacher union activities are taxpayer supported. According to *School Reform News*, “Teacher unions in 20 Colorado school districts have spent more than \$5.8 million in taxpayer dollars on union activities in the past five years, from union presidents’ salaries to paid teacher days off. Collective bargaining agreements between unions and these districts compelled tax funding beyond the dues collected from teacher payrolls.” To read more, go to <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2012/01/13/colorado-teacher-unions-receive-millions-directly-taxpayers> It would be interesting to know if your school district pays for things like release time, union president’s salaries, etc. Please let me know via return email or post on the CTEN blog - <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com/>

Lance Izumi, senior director of education studies at the Pacific Research Institute, has written an excellent little book, “Obama’s Education Takeover.” (<http://www.amazon.com/Obamas-Education-Takeover-Encounter-Broadsides/dp/1594036284>) The book addresses what has been called “an unprecedented centralization of education policy....” A companion piece video can be found here - <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/new-whiteboard-video-attacks-obamas-education-takeover/>

Our special email a few weeks ago which suggested you to write in and tell us “What makes a good teacher?” and asked for volunteers to be in a CTEN TV ad (pending funding) elicited quite a few responses. I’d like to thank all who took the time to do so. One person wrote the following,

*My point is that the general public conception of CA teachers is that we are all lazy union rebels who protest for more money all the time, get lots of vacations, and that we are all angry LAUSD employees! I hear this all the time from people who aren't my close friends, and it drives me nuts! How can we change this perception?*

If you have any comments, responses, etc. to her query, please post on the blog or respond to me by email and I will post some of the feedback in the next newsletter.

One CTENer emailed us that many schools are not safe from earthquakes. A report from California Watch claims that there are “systemic failures by the state's chief regulator of construction standards for public schools.” To read more of this disturbing story, go to <http://californiawatch.org/earthquakes>

If you are a charter school teacher, you may find AB 1172 more than a little troubling. The bill would allow local school boards to block the creation of a new charter school if it would have a “negative fiscal impact” on the school district. Trouble is, the bill doesn’t clearly define what that means. California’s charter law already provides several clearly defined justifications for denying new petitions. The bill would only obscure the existing law. And besides, charter schools get less funding than traditional public schools. According to the nonpartisan California Legislative Analyst Office, new charters received \$721 less per pupil in 2010-11 than traditional public schools. The bill currently awaits a vote from the state senate’s rules committee. To read more, go to <http://www.city-journal.org/2012/cjc0313ls.html>

And finally, there will be an initiative on the November ballot that, if passed, would have a major effect on teachers in California. There are four elements to the Stop Special Interest Money Now ( <http://stopspecialinterestmoney.org/> ) proposition:

- 1. Bans both corporate and union contributions to state and local candidates;*
- 2. Prohibits government contractors from contributing money to government officials who award them contracts;*
- 3. Prohibits corporations and labor unions from collecting political funds from employees and union members by means of payroll deduction; and*
- 4. Makes all employee political contributions strictly voluntary, requiring annual written consent.*

Number 4 is of special interest to teachers as it would make it illegal for teachers unions to deduct political dues from teachers’ paychecks. Of course, teachers would still be free to donate on their own.

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. We do our best to keep it up-to-date. And if you need information and can’t find it on the website, please send us an email – [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