



California Teachers Empowerment Network

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.

March 16, 2016

Dear Colleague,

California State Assemblywoman Shannon Grove, representing the 34th district (mostly Kern County), has come up a couple of interesting bills. AB 2753 would “require California’s public employee unions to post an itemized version of its budget online, making it accessible for its members.” A second bill, AB 2754, would “require public unions to hold an election every two years to determine if the current labor union should continue to represent its members. The election would also allow workers to select another public employee union to take its place.” To learn more about these bills, go here -

http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB2753 and
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB2754

Whatever the fate of the above bills, if you are looking to start a “local only” teachers union with no ties to NEA/CTA or AFT/CFT, please contact Rafael Ruano for help in doing so. If you’d like more information, go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/california-independent-teachers.html>

On February 11th, *LA School Report* released an internal Los Angeles Unified School District document, which stated that just 54 percent of seniors in LA are on track to graduate. The drop off from 74 percent last year was immediately attributed to new requirements, which ensure that graduating students are ready for acceptance into California public universities. But then, due to the district’s “credit recovery plan” (allowing students to take crash courses on weekends, holidays, etc.), the graduation rate was upgraded to a less cataclysmic 63 percent. Shortly thereafter, the district again raised the rate to 80 percent. Many are skeptical about LAUSD’s happy talk, claiming that “credit recovery is not content recovery.” And to buttress that point, less than 40 percent of 12th graders are ready for college, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). While those numbers are for students across the U.S., students in the Golden State do no better. To read more, go to <http://www.joannejacobs.com/2016/03/get-real-most-grads-arent-college-ready/>, <http://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-me-grad-rate-20160224-story.html> and <http://laschoolreport.com/exclusive-its-all-hands-on-deck-as-laUSD-says-nearly-1-in-2-seniors-not-on-track-to-graduate/>

After losing the *Vergara* case, in which five of the state's tenure, seniority and dismissal statutes were ruled unconstitutional, the defendants, CTA and the state of California appealed. On February 25th, three justices on the California Court of Appeals heard arguments and both sides were upbeat after the session.

"I am delighted, it's a great day for the students of California," said attorney Michael Rubin, after arguing for the California Teachers Association and California Federation of Teachers. "I am confident the justices understood the questions and why tenure benefits the teachers. I think they can see why this trial judge grossly overstepped his bounds."

Arguing for the students, attorney Theodore J. Boutrous Jr. said that he felt the judges planned to uphold the ruling. "We were able to get across the dangers of these laws and how they deprive thousands of California children of the quality education they deserve," he said.

But whichever way the appeal goes, the losing side will surely take the case to the California Supreme Court. To read more, go to <https://www.the74million.org/article/calif-appeals-judges-jump-in-during-vergara-arguments-both-sides-predicting-victory>

On the parental choice front, there are rumblings in California. Unite 4 CA Students is asking people to "advocate for school choice in California." Though not suggesting any specific plan at this time, the organization is serious about getting a choice initiative on the ballot in 2018. To learn more, go here - <http://u4cas.org/>

Regarding choice – how much regulation is optimal? Some very smart people debated this issue at a Cato Institute confab earlier this month.

Since Milton Friedman, school choice proponents have argued that vouchers and other private choice programs would improve student performance, and nearly every "gold-standard" study has found they do – until now. Recent studies of Louisiana's voucher program have found that it actually reduced students' performance on standardized tests. Why? In this forum top experts will discuss several possible reasons for this, including the role of various regulations, and will debate what the body of research says about how to design choice policies.

To watch the video, go to <http://www.cato.org/events/school-choice-regulation-friend-or-foe>

Also, some folks are trying to make California's charter school law go away, claiming "the charter school industry is at the heart of the corporate takeover of our public schools." To read more about this effort, go to <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/repeal-charter-school-act-of-1992-in-ca-ballot>

The Association of American Educators' 2016 survey has been released, and, as always, it's interesting to see where independent-minded teachers come down on education issues. Just a small sampling:

- 69% of teachers would support a blended learning environment in which students spend part of their day with a teacher and part of their day on a computer.

- 67% of those surveyed are interested in negotiating their own contract so that they can negotiate a salary and benefits package that best suits their lifestyle.
- 95% of teachers expressed support for course choice, allowing students to craft custom educational plans utilizing a variety of providers.

To access the full survey, go here - <http://www.aateachers.org/index.php/blog/1605-aae-releases-2016-national-member-survey>

If you missed the Concerned Educators Against Forced Unionism conference, which features Rebecca Friedrichs, lead plaintiff in *Friedrichs v. CTA*, you can watch a recording here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33YY7wQgfI8&feature=youtu.be>

Speaking of *Friedrichs*, Rebecca and I joined host Rick Reiff to discuss the lawsuit on PBS' *Inside OC* television show. Rebecca does the first 15 minutes solo and during the second half, I am joined by CTA president Eric Heins for a discussion about the merits of the case. After the show ended, the video kept rolling and Heins and I engaged in a spirited 9 minute debate. The TV show can be accessed here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSn-onxoHQw> The post-show debate can be viewed here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytQ5h3Wv6mM>

And finally, a brief word from the Conservative Educators Caucus:

The NEA's Conservative Educators Caucus, whose purpose is to influence union policy, was founded in 2001. Because we are a well-established voice for conservatism in this liberal organization, now is NOT the time to relinquish our caucus standing. In order to survive, we need an infusion of active NEA members and supportive associate members: teachers, retirees or just concerned conservative volunteers to contribute ideas, participate in exhibits and in NEA policy-making procedures, help raise funds, and recruit members.

The NEA convention this July will be in Washington, D.C. and we need volunteers to participate at our exhibit. The NEA EXPO lasts for two days and we need help. Also, the EXPO is a very expensive endeavor and donations are welcome. If you are interested in participating or in becoming an active or associate member as a teacher, retiree or volunteer, please email our caucus chair, Lydia Gutierrez at lydia4education@gmail.com Also, please share this with teachers you know. Thank you.

If you are interested in giving CTEN brochures to colleagues, you can print them right from our 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