



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.

April 19, 2017

Dear Colleague,

Two teacher-related bills are currently making the rounds in Sacramento. State Senators Henry Stern (D-Los Angeles) and Cathleen Galgiani (D-Stockton) have introduced the “Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act of 2017” which offers a novel incentive for teachers to remain in the profession. SB 807 would exempt California educators from paying the state income tax after five years on the job, in addition to allowing a tax deduction for the cost of attaining their teaching credential. If passed, the bill is estimated to cost California taxpayers an additional \$600 million a year. It’s a bit puzzling, because at the same time proponents say we need to take this measure because there is a teacher shortage, teachers are being laid off in many districts. To read the bill, go here - http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB807 To read a contrarian view, go here <http://www.ocregister.com/2017/03/26/is-teacher-shortage-a-union-created-problem/>

The second bill comes from Assemblywoman Shirley Weber. Cosponsored by Teach Plus and Educators for Excellence, two teacher-led activist organizations, the San Diego Democrat has introduced legislation that would extend the time it takes to attain permanent status from two years to three. Assembly Bill 1220 would also allow some teachers who don’t meet the requirements within three years an extra year or two, during which time they could get additional mentoring and receive other professional development resources. So, depending on a teacher’s effectiveness, the permanence perk would be moved from two to as many as five years. While a principal may not want to take a chance on a teacher who is not doing well in his first two years, the added time frame might see that teacher blossom – or it might not. For more on the bill, go to <https://a79.asmdc.org/press-releases/weber-joins-teacher-groups-introduce-teacher-and-student-success-act> For a different view, go to <http://www.ocregister.com/2017/04/07/ab1220-is-an-improvement-but-why-do-teachers-need-tenure-at-all/>

In a post for the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, EdChoice’s Greg Forster makes the case that “School Choice Makes Teachers Free to Teach.”

Our whole education system is designed to treat teachers like factory line workers, not responsible professionals. That's because the government monopoly on schooling makes every political interest group see schools as its business. If government runs the schools, you're not allowed to tell taxpayers and voters to butt out of the classroom—not if we're going to have a constitutional, democratic republic where government is of, by, and for the people.

Some of these interest groups are well-meaning and just want to help. Some have strong ideological commitments they want the government school monopoly to teach. And a lot of them are just greedy and don't care about education one way or the other as long as the gravy trains run on time. But all of them want to have their fingers in the classroom, which means the whole education system runs on politics.

To read more of Forster's compelling piece, go to <http://www.ocpathink.org/article/school-choice-makes-teachers-free-to-teach>

The latest state to move on school choice is Arizona, which earlier this month expanded its educational savings account program. On April 6th, Gov. Doug Ducey signed legislation to make all public school students in Arizona eligible to get state money to attend private and parochial schools. But the plan does not mean every child would be able to get one of these vouchers.

The bill has a limit, though that could be removed by lawmakers in the future. On paper, the legislation makes every one of the 1.1 million students in Arizona public schools eligible for vouchers, each worth about \$4,400 a year for most students. But to get the votes, supporters had to agree to a cap of about 30,000 vouchers by 2021.

To learn more about the expanded AZ ESA law, go to http://tucson.com/news/local/education/gov-ducey-signs-big-expansion-of-arizona-s-private-school/article_7eff04cb-f746-51b5-b8d9-89e309c6917e.html

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos recently had a chat with Russ Whitehurst of the Brookings Institution. Among other things, she compared the opposition to the school choice movement to that of taxi companies which have been fighting ride-sharing companies like Uber and Lyft.

Just as the traditional taxi system revolted against ride sharing, so too does the education establishment feel threatened by the rise of school choice. In both cases, the entrenched status quo has resisted models that empower individuals.

To read more of the interview, go here - <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/29/us/politics/betsy-devos-education-school-choice-voucher.html>

On a similar note, EdChoice's Jason Bedrick wrote a cogent post for Jay Greene's blog, in which he maintains that "Real Accountability Is Choice, Not Regulation." He writes,

...true accountability is when service providers are directly answerable to the people most affected by their performance. When that isn't possible, as when a utility company has a monopoly, top-down regulations may be necessary instead. But we shouldn't confuse the inferior alternative accountability regime for the ideal form of accountability just because that's what we're used to.

To read Bedrick's post, go to <https://jaypgreene.com/2017/01/27/real-accountability-is-choice-not-regulation/>

Mike Antonucci has written a persuasive essay about "What Unions Really Fear." The teacher union watchdog claims that it's not right-to-work laws that unions are really afraid of, but rather loss of exclusive bargaining rights.

While even the loss of exclusivity would not be the end of public sector unions, it would devastate their current mode of operations and force revolutionary change upon them.

Everyone talks about the effects of competition on schools. No one spends time on the effects of competition on school labor relations. Would it be chaos, as many union advocates claim, or would it settle into a mode similar to private schools, universities, and businesses?

Teacher unions will not thrive in a world without agency fees. But they will survive. They are not prepared to survive in a world without exclusive bargaining.

To read the entire post, go to <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2017/04/05/what-unions-really-fear/>

Also, should you be interested in seeing the latest CTA Hudson notice, which details the union's financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2015, it is now available on the CTEN website. It includes "Supplemental Summary and Detail Schedules of Nonchargeable and Chargeable Expenditures of Agency Fees for 2014-2015" as well as a report by independent auditors. To access the 111 page document, go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/CTA%20-%20Hudson%20Notice%20-%202014-15.pdf>

Vicki Alger, research fellow at the Independent Institute, recently delivered a speech at The Heartland Institute about her new book, *Failure: The Federal Misedukation of America's Children*. Alger claims that federal involvement in education has been a failure and assesses strategies for success.

For nearly 100 years the federal government left education almost entirely in the hands of the citizenry and state and local governments, but in 1979, with the creation of the US Department of Education a sprawling bureaucracy with 153 programs, 5,000 employees, and an annual budget of approximately \$70 billion, the federal government intruded itself into almost every area of education.

To read more about Alger's book and view her talk at Heartland, go here - <http://illinoisreview.typepad.com/illinoisreview/2017/02/thorner-ed-reform-expert-recommends-shutting-down-depart-of-education.html>

And finally, for you So Cal baseball fans, the LA Dodgers will be hosting its annual "Teacher Appreciation Night" on May 1st. For details, go to <http://m.mlb.com/dodgers/tickets/special-events/teachers>

CTEN has three Facebook pages. If you have a Facebook account, we urge you to visit ours and let us know your thoughts. Having a dialogue among teachers is an effective way to spread information and share our experiences and ideas. Our original Facebook page can be found here

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/125866159932/> Our second page, which deals with teacher evaluation and transparency, can be accessed here -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/126900987357825/> Our newest page is *Teachers for School Choice* and can be accessed here - <https://www.facebook.com/teachersforchoice?fref=ts>

In any event, if you enjoy these letters and find them informative, please pass them along to your colleagues. We know that there are many independent-minded teachers in California who are looking for alternative sources of information. Many thanks, as always, for your interest and support.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President