



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

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

May 18, 2010

Dear Colleague,

Thanks to all of you who responded to our poll about SB 955 here in California. Not surprisingly, the responses were very mixed. This Senate Bill, which would let local school districts make their own staffing decisions, thus eliminating that part of the education code which mandates seniority as the determinant, has hit a roadblock. California State Senator President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg has pulled it back in order to get feedback from stakeholders about various aspects of the bill. To read Mr. Steinberg's letter, go to [http://www.utla.net/system/files/SB955\\_EducationStakeholders\\_20100429.pdf](http://www.utla.net/system/files/SB955_EducationStakeholders_20100429.pdf) If you would like to have some input, we suggest you contact Mr. Steinberg as soon as possible.

As we mentioned last month, education reform, in one form or another, is sweeping the country. Perhaps the most comprehensive of many state measures was just passed last week in Colorado. Rick Hess, in National Review Online, says that SB 191, "...would dismantle teacher tenure, a hyper-rigid, industrial-era policy; require that teachers and schools mutually consent before a teacher can be placed in a specific school; establish procedures for handling teachers who aren't placed; specify that teacher evaluations can be considered when layoffs are made; and mandate that schools hire and compensate teachers based on performance."

But, in the next breath, he states, "However, the legislation goes too far when it comes to value-added metrics — that is, the measurement of teachers' performance by the effect they have on their students' test scores." To read the article, go to <http://article.nationalreview.com/433469/teacher-quality-in-colorado/frederick-m-hess>

Also in last month's newsletter, we talked about the public employee pension debacle that our state is facing. In the Spring 2010 *City Journal*, Steven Malanga goes into great detail about California's fiscal mess and enlightens us on how we got to the place we are now in. To read the article, go to [http://www.city-journal.org/2010/20\\_2\\_california-unions.html](http://www.city-journal.org/2010/20_2_california-unions.html)

In the latest edition of the *National Council on Teacher Quality Bulletin*, there is a report of a Broad Foundation study of Teach For America teachers in Los Angeles. They say, "Based on a sample of second-year and alumni TFA and non-TFA teachers in LAUSD, Teach For America teachers were found to have significantly higher student achievement

gains than their traditionally certified peers. These effects are significant when compared with "early career" teachers and veteran teachers alike." To see the Broad study, go to <http://www.broadeducation.org/asset/1128-tfalausdstudy.pdf>

In the same issue of the *NCTQ Bulletin*, there is yet another article which pummels our schools of education. This time, it's a report about the grade inflation that goes on at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. "Everybody's a winner at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's school of education. An astonishing 96 percent of its undergraduates receive A's, boasting a nearly perfect average GPA among its 1,400 students of 3.91." To see the report, go to [http://www.nctq.org/docs/The\\_Wisconsin\\_Policy\\_Research\\_6285](http://www.nctq.org/docs/The_Wisconsin_Policy_Research_6285). This report is in line with others which show that grade inflation in our education schools is indeed a national problem.

And talking about teacher quality, we have learned about a website whose mission is, "to support the retention of high quality teachers into a second stage of their careers by expanding leadership opportunities and financial incentives for those who demonstrate success in the classroom." It was founded on the premise that teachers want to learn and grow in the profession, and want to ensure that their development results in increased learning among their students. If this is something you are interested in, we encourage you to visit their website - <http://www.teachplus.org/index.htm>

Regarding union dues for 2010-2011, they would seem to be going up. According to Mike Antonucci's May 10 *Communique*, "The California Teachers Association, which claims to have lost 16,000 members, will increase dues by \$18 to \$639 for the coming year." Why, you ask, would dues go up when teachers are losing their jobs? The answer is because the part of your dues that goes to CTA is based on a formula using average teacher salary. As Antonucci says, "...during a time of layoffs, the average salary is likely to increase out of proportion to increases in wages because the low end of the salary scale is removed." In other words, the teachers who are losing their jobs are the newer, and therefore lower paid, ones.

And finally, after several of you have asked, CTEN now has a limited number of t-shirts available. They are navy blue with the CTEN logo on front and "A resource for all who care about education" printed on the back. They come preshrunk, in small, medium, large and extra large. If you would like one, all you have to do is make a \$15 donation to CTEN via PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.htm> ) Then, please let us know what size and where to send it and we will get it out to you.

As our polls seem to have become very popular, we will continue to send them out. The next question will be emailed to you in a week or so. Also, please let us know if you have a particular question that you would like us to pose to our subscribers.

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Your feedback is very helpful and appreciated, so please continue providing it so that we can continue to meet your needs. Thank you very much.

Larry Sand

CTEN President