



# 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.*

June 18, 2014

Dear Colleague,

Undoubtedly the education story of the year is the decision in the Students Matter (*Vergara v. California*) case. Judge Rolf Treu ruled in favor of the plaintiffs every way imaginable, and as a result, the state education code will have to be changed. The tenure, seniority and the dismissal statutes have been deemed unconstitutional and will have to be replaced. While many reformers have been triumphal in response to the ruling, I'm afraid that may be short-sighted because no one knows what will replace the now-defunct laws. It could take years to rewrite the statutes, and the legislature may choose solutions that are little better than the current state of affairs. And nothing will change for the time being since the teachers unions are appealing the ruling. I would urge you to read the 16-page judgment for yourself and not rely on the bevy of articles that have been written about it, many of which are quite misleading. To read the decision, go to <http://studentsmatter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tenative-Decision.pdf> *City Journal's* associate editor Ben Boychuk comments here - <http://www.city-journal.org/2014/cjc0611bb.html> The teachers unions were not shy – to say the least – about responding. CTA weighed in here - <http://www.cta.org/en/Blog/2014/June/Vergara-Verdict.aspx> (I will have a piece published in *City Journal* (accessible at [http://www.city-journal.org/author\\_index.php?author=703](http://www.city-journal.org/author_index.php?author=703)) shortly where I look into the future and speculate about the fate of the issues in question.

The pension problem in California isn't going away. The latest plan from Jerry Brown is ranking some and will have an effect on just about every school teacher in the state.

*California's public school districts could face difficult cutbacks if state officials move forward with a plan to bail out the retirement fund for teachers, officials and educators say, but even those painful steps may fall short of curing the pension deficit if investments don't meet expectations.*

*Under a proposal released last week by Gov. Jerry Brown, more money will flow into the California State Teachers' Retirement System to begin closing an estimated \$74-billion shortfall. But addressing that problem creates a different one: School systems would have to quickly pare back spending for next year, and they would face steeper diversions of dollars in later years.*

To read more, go to <http://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-me-schools-pensions-20140521-story.html>

The National Council on Teacher Quality has come out with a study on teacher absenteeism.

*Teachers in the nation's 40 largest school districts came to school 94 percent of the time in the 2012-2013 school year, according to the report released Tuesday by the National Council on Teacher Quality, a think tank that advocates tougher teacher evaluations. "Like clockwork," said Nancy Waymack, the group's managing director of district policy. On average, the urban teachers missed about 11 school days out of 186, and used slightly less than their allotment of short-term leave.*

*But the National Council on Teacher Quality classifies 16 percent of teachers in those cities as "chronically absent," meaning they missed 18 or more days per school year. Together, chronically absent teachers accounted for one-third of all teacher absences. Districts with formal policies designed to discourage teachers from missing class "do not appear to have better attendance rates than those without such policies," the report concludes.*

To continue reading this story, go to [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/03/teacher-chronic-absenteeism\\_n\\_5434219.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/03/teacher-chronic-absenteeism_n_5434219.html) To see the NCTQ study, go to [http://www.nctq.org/dmsStage/RollCall\\_TeacherAttendance](http://www.nctq.org/dmsStage/RollCall_TeacherAttendance)

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, Californians voted for – among other things – the Superintendent of Public Instruction. While current SPI leader and CTA choice Tom Torlakson came in first, he didn't get a majority of the vote and was forced into a head-to-head election in November with reformer Marshall Tuck, who came in a distant second. For more, go to <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Schools-chief-It-s-Torlakson-vs-Tuck-in-November-5527931.php>

From Kansas, we have a story: "State Board of Ed approves regulations for hiring teachers with subject expertise but no education degree." While teachers in California can circumvent the traditional ed school route to the classroom, Kansas is taking it to another level. To read the story, go to <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2014/jun/03/state-board-ed-approves-regulations-hiring-teacher/>

Late last month, we sent out the results of the Survey Monkey poll we took on Common Core. In case you missed that email, the results are attached. And again, many thanks to those of you who participated.

The subject of "teacher jails" or "rubber rooms" is certainly a contentious one. The Los Angeles Unified School District has decided to eliminate them – in reality, district offices that house teachers who have been accused of various misdeeds – and instead, the teacher will have to sit at home during the school day. *The Los Angeles Times* reported on the story - <http://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-teacher-jail-20140527-story.html> Former state senator Gloria Romero, who now heads up the Foundation for Parent Empowerment, doesn't like the decision. To get her take, go here - <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/teachers-616655-teacher-jails.html>

If you are still using a school email to receive these newsletters, please consider sending us your personal email address. More and more school districts are blocking CTEN. In any event, if you

enjoy these letters and find them informative, please pass them along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

If you would like to see us address certain issues, topics, etc. in these newsletters or on our website – <http://www.ctenhome.org> – please let us know.

And have a great summer!

Sincerely,  
Larry Sand  
CTEN President