



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 21, 2017

Dear Colleague,

The latest attempt to rework teacher permanence comes from California State Assemblywoman Shirley Weber. With the sponsorship of Teach Plus and Educators for Excellence – two teacher-led activist organizations – the San Diego Democrat introduced AB 1220 in March. As originally written, the bill would have extended the time it takes to attain permanent status from two years to three. It would have also allowed some teachers who don't meet the requirements in three years an extra year or two in which they could get additional mentoring and be the recipient of other professional development resources.

But after lobbying from the state teachers unions, Weber's bill has morphed into something not far from what we have now. As *Ed Source's* John Fensterwald writes,

The new version keeps the current system, with two years as the standard period, but would allow a third year of probation if the district develops an improvement plan to address deficiencies that a teacher's evaluation identified and then makes training and other help for teachers a budget priority.

To read about the original bill, go here - <https://a79.asmdc.org/press-releases/weber-joins-teacher-groups-introduce-teacher-and-student-success-act> To learn more about the latest version of AB 1220, go to <https://edsource.org/2017/advocates-of-3-year-teacher-tenure-face-big-decision/583164>

According to The Literacy Project, there are currently 45 million Americans who are functionally illiterate, unable to read above a 5th grade level, and half of all adults can't read a book at an 8th grade level. In California, 25 percent of the state's 6 million students are unable to perform basic reading skills. At the same time, the Freedom Project reports that "50% of California Kids Can't Read." These are daunting numbers and the question becomes what do we do about it? Clearly no country can function properly with such alarming illiteracy rates.

To learn more go to <http://literacyprojectfoundation.org/> and <http://freedomproject.com/the-newman-report/227-50-of-california-kids-can-t-read>

And speaking of illiteracy... On track for a graduation rate of 49 percent last June, the Los Angeles Unified School District instituted “a “credit-recovery plan,” which allowed students to take crash courses on weekends and holidays to make up for classes they failed or missed. Combined with the elimination of the California High School Exit Examination, the classes, which many claimed were short on content, raised the district’s graduation rate to 75 percent practically overnight. In 2015, only one in five fourth-graders in Los Angeles performed at or above “proficient” in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

So last month, with the help of some wealthy philanthropists, two young reformers, Nick Melvoin and Kelly Gonez, were elected to the LAUSD school board. Will they be able to affect change in the embattled school district? We will find out shortly as they take office on July 1st.

To learn more about the election, go here - <https://www.city-journal.org/html/school-board-shakeup-los-angeles-15239.html> To read an interview with Melvoin and see what his priorities are, go here - <http://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-me-edu-nick-melvoin-20170609-htlstory.html>

On the national scene, Donald Trump’s budget has gotten a lot of ink. Because a small amount of money is earmarked for school choice, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten coauthored an opinion piece that claims “President Trump wants to siphon billions of dollars from public schools to fund private and religious school vouchers. It’s an idea that’s bad for kids, public education and our democracy.” However, most of the money that the budget has earmarked for choice is for *public school* choice, not vouchers.

To read Weingarten’s op-ed, go to <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-edelman-weingarten-school-vouchers-20170531-story.html> To read my take, go to <http://www.oeregister.com/2017/06/08/trumps-education-budget-cuts-are-minimal/> Also, Pacific Research Institute scholar Lance Izumi weighs in here - http://www.realcleareducation.com/articles/2017/06/02/why_trump_is_right_to_cut_federal_education_spending_110165.html The Independent Institute’s Vicki Alger and Bill Evers also wrote about the budget here - <http://www.independent.org/newsroom/article.asp?id=9093>

Also on school choice, John Kruger, founder and director of The Kids Union, a nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness for school choice reforms, has penned a very thoughtful piece for *LA School Report*. It begins,

Imagine starting your college journey with a \$75,000 scholarship. If that piques your interest, you’ll want to tune in to a brewing education battle in the Golden State. While the school choice debate has often centered on education outcomes, its fiscal impact in California is also of serious consequence. School choice could literally help send most students to college with a huge portion of the cost already accounted for. The math is actually fairly simple.

To continue reading this provocative piece, go to <http://laschoolreport.com/commentary-school-choice-could-make-college-affordable/>

The *Friedrichs* lawsuit, which would have made belonging to a public employee union optional as a condition of employment nationwide, was set to pass muster with the Supreme Court last year. But when Justice Antonin Scalia died in February, 2016, the almost certain fifth and deciding vote went with him, thus keeping half the country's government workers forcibly tied to unions.

But now son of *Friedrichs* is upon us. On June 6th, the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation asked SCOTUS to hear *Janus v AFSCME*. Mark Janus, a child support specialist who works for the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, is compelled to send part of his paycheck to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees even though the union does not "represent his interests." Right-to-work proponents are optimistic that the Court will take the case and that Neil Gorsuch, Scalia's replacement, will come down as the fifth vote on the side of employee freedom.

To learn more about the case, go to <http://www.nrtw.org/news/janus-cert-2017/> To read more about Mark Janus, go here <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-union-dues-supreme-court-afscme-perspec-0106-20160105-story.html>

In 2012, the EdChoice released a comprehensive study which details an employment explosion in America's public schools.

America's K-12 public education system has experienced tremendous historical growth in employment, according to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. Between fiscal year (FY) 1950 and FY 2009, the number of K-12 public school students in the United States increased by 96 percent while the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) school employees grew 386 percent. Public schools grew staffing at a rate four times faster than the increase in students over that time period. Of those personnel, teachers' numbers increased 252 percent while administrators and other staff experienced growth of 702 percent, more than seven times the increase in students.

The study's author Benjamin Scafidi has just updated his numbers and the current report reveals that the surge is still with us. Scafidi writes that \$35 billion is spent yearly on the unnecessary surge and states,

One thing public schools could have done with that recurring \$35 billion: Give every teacher a permanent \$11,100 raise. Another potential use of those funds: Give more than 4 million students \$8,000 education savings accounts (ESAs) that could be used to offset tuition payments at private schools, to save for college, or to pay for other educational services, therapies, curriculum, and materials. What it boils down to: Dollars used to fund the public school staffing surge placed a significant opportunity cost that precluded raises for teachers and/or school choice opportunities for students.

To learn more, go to <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Back-to-the-Staffing-Surge-by-Ben-Scafidi.pdf>

Activist and writer David Horowitz has come up with a code of ethics for k-12 teachers. Co-written with Mark Tapson, their plan is to forbid "teachers to use their classrooms for political,

ideological, or religious advocacy. Teachers in violation of the Code would be subject to penalties such as probation, suspension and loss of their teaching licenses.” More specifically,

At a minimum, these regulations shall provide that no teacher is permitted during class time or while otherwise operating within the scope of employment as a teacher in a public educational institution to do the following:

(1) Endorse, support, or oppose any candidate or nominee for public office or any elected or appointed official regardless of whether such official is a member of the local, state, or federal government;

(2) Endorse, support, or oppose any pending, proposed, or enacted legislation or regulation regardless of whether such legislation or regulation is pending, proposed, or has been enacted at the local, state, or federal level;

(3) Endorse, support, or oppose any pending, proposed, or decided court case or judicial action regardless of whether such court case or judicial action is at the local, state, or federal level;

To learn more, go here <http://dailycaller.com/2017/06/14/reclaiming-our-schools-a-code-of-ethics-for-k-12-educators/>

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 to be 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