



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 20, 2018

Dear Colleague,

As you all know by now, the California governor's race will pit two candidates with divergent views on just about everything. On education, Gavin Newsom claims we need to think about education as a lifelong pursuit. "Our role begins when babies are still in the womb and it doesn't end until we've done all we can to prepare them for a quality job and successful career," he says.

His opponent John Cox is in favor of school choice, stating, "We need to give parents and children the education they deserve, and that means more charters, giving parents more choice and encouraging home schooling."

To read more about the candidates' positions on various education issues, go [here](#).

Also of concern to California's educators is the Superintendent of Public Instruction position, and there the difference between the candidates is about as wide as the gubernatorial candidates. Marshall Tuck is running as a reformer who favors charter schools as an alternative. Also, "as CEO of the semi-autonomous Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, he helped instigate a lawsuit in 2010 that challenged teacher layoffs in Los Angeles Unified based on seniority, which led to massive layoffs in several Partnership schools. Tuck argues seniority should be one factor, not the sole factor, in teacher layoffs."

Tuck's opponent, Assemblyman Tony Thurmond, is backed by CTA. His platform includes increasing school funding, investing in language immersion programs for English learners, and addressing the teacher shortage by making college cheaper and more accessible for aspiring teachers, streamlining the teacher credentialing process, and working with legislators to provide access to affordable housing to educators in communities where they teach.

To learn more about Tuck and Thurmond, go [here](#). To learn what the job description is for the SPI position, go [here](#).

On the school choice front, a bill proposed by Congressman Jim Banks (R-IN) directs the Department of Education to establish a program that would “provide children with parents on active duty in the uniformed services with funds for specified educational purposes.” The proposed law would allow military parents to establish Education Savings Accounts, which would enable them to use public funds for private school tuition, online learning programs, tutoring, etc. Proponents say that ESAs are especially important for military families, many of whom move around frequently and should not be subjected to our zip-code mandated education system. Upon introducing the bill in March, Banks penned a piece for *The Wall Street Journal*, in which he wrote,

A 2017 survey of Military Times readers showed that educational opportunities play an important role in determining whether a military family accepts a particular assignment—or even remains in the service at all. Thirty-five percent of service members have considered leaving the military because of the limited education options available, and 40% have either declined or would decline a career-advancing opportunity at a different installation if it meant their child would have to leave a high-performing school.

To read the *WSJ* piece, go [here](#). To dig into the proposed law, go [here](#).

The Manhattan Institute’s Max Eden has written a riveting article about a discipline breakdown which resulted in “bullying, chaos and death” at a high school in New York City. The Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation was once a “safe and supportive school that fell into chaos as new administrators implemented a supposedly more positive approach to school discipline.”

This change was in line with New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio’s campaign promise of putting city schools at the vanguard of a nationwide movement to unwind traditional discipline in favor of a new progressive, or restorative, approach. At UA Wildlife, meaningful consequences for misbehavior were eliminated, alternative approaches failed, and administrators responded to a rising tide of disorder and violence by sweeping the evidence under the rug, students and teachers said. If they had prioritized student safety over statistics, McCree’s (a student who was murdered) teachers believe, he would still be alive. And they fear that the dynamics that destroyed UA Wildlife are playing out across New York City.

To read Eden’s provocative exposé, go [here](#).

A decision in the *Janus* case is due any day now and CTEN will keep you abreast with information about the effect of the ruling on teachers, the unions’ reactions, etc. If the litigation is successful, CTA is projecting a loss of 23,000 members, according to Mike Antonucci. The union also figures to lose a great majority of its 28,000 fee payers, those who have quit the union but still are forced to pay the “agency fee.” But as a way to soften the financial hit, CTA has announced a per-teacher dues raise of \$23 a year for the 2018-2019 school year, bringing the state component for teachers’ dues to \$700 annually, which will help ease the pain of a membership decline.

NEA is also planning strategies pending an adverse *Janus* decision. While it is preparing for a 10 percent teacher quit-rate and has slashed its budget by \$50 million, NEA has also raised its per teacher share of dues, from \$189 to \$192, and has a few tricks up its sleeve to help make up for the financial shortfall. It is pondering a new class of member called “community ally.” As Antonucci writes, the new category would be open to “any person who demonstrates support in advancing the cause of public education, who advocates for the mission, vision, and core values of the Association, and who is not eligible for any other membership category.” Since labor unions can only solicit political action committee contributions from members, this could open the door for deep-pocketed folks like Tom Steyer to join. This strategy is legally tenuous to say the least, and most likely will be subject to judicial scrutiny.

To read Antonucci’s pieces on CTA and NEA, go [here](#) and [here](#).

Educators for Excellence has released “Voices from the Classroom: A Survey of America’s Educators” which the group says is a “ground-breaking, nationally representative survey written for teachers, by teachers.” And there are certainly some very interesting findings. For example, the poll found that 57 percent of all teachers have neither read nor heard anything about the *Janus* case. Another question from the survey addressed agency fee payers and asked if the Court case rules in favor of Mark Janus, “How likely would you be to opt out of paying agency fees to a union?” Sixty-one percent said they would be somewhat or very likely to do so. To read more about the survey, go [here](#).

In April 2015, *Bain v. CTA*, a lawsuit brought by StudentsFirst, a Sacramento-based activist outfit founded by Michelle Rhee, was filed on behalf of four public school teachers in federal court in California. The aim of the suit was for teachers not to have to resign from a union because they didn’t want to pay for the political part of union dues. Well, today the suit is officially dead. The 9th Circuit dismissed the case because all of the original plaintiffs have left their teaching positions in the three years the case has been pending and are no longer union members. *Bain* attorney Josh Lipshutz said the issues it challenged are still outstanding and “plans to file a similar lawsuit, possibly with the Association of American Educators, a non-union organization of educators, as plaintiffs.” Lipshutz explains,

Janus is great for teachers who want to opt out of unions and want nothing to do with them. But there’s arguably a larger class of teachers who want the benefits, who want to serve on policymaking committees in their districts, but don’t want to be put to the choice of all or nothing. Without Bain, teachers will still be put to that choice.

To read more, go [here](#).

As per the recent email we sent you, I have been informed that the law firm is still looking for plaintiffs.

A law firm is looking for current or newly retired teachers who feel they have been unjustly treated and would like an opportunity to recoup agency fees they were forced to pay going back three years, which is the statute of limitations period. If you are interested, please contact Sloane Skinner directly at sskinner@clarkhill.com or call her at 202-640-6673.

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.

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. Enjoy your summer!

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President