



Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

July 19, 2011

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.

Dear Colleague,

Since our last newsletter, two major pieces of legislation have become law. On June 30th, Governor Brown signed AB 114 (<http://toped.svefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/StateBud-TrailerBillAB114Text063011.pdf>), which prohibits laying off any teachers. As such, school districts have been given mandates that will be difficult for many to carry out. *Educated Guess* writer John Fensterwald says there are three ways that AB 114 steals power away from the local district.

First, it requires that each school district “assume the same level of funding as last year and maintain staffing and program levels consistent with that. Legislators are dictating this even though they admit there’s a good chance that revenues may not bear that out.”

Secondly, AB 114 eliminates the option that “districts would have over the next 45 days to make staff adjustments if they view this as necessary. Instead, the legislature is suspending that capability under the law for the next year. As School Services noted, ‘This provision is clearly designed to protect union positions, even if the district cannot afford to pay for the services.’”

Finally, the new law will “suspend key provisions for one year of AB 1200, under which school districts must self-certify that they can balance their budgets in the current year and one and two years into the future. Those that cannot must work with their county office of education to align revenues and spending. This year 13 districts were negatively certified in the latest filing, indicating they could not balance their budgets this year and next. An additional 130 districts – nearly one in seven – acknowledged trouble balancing their budgets two years out. AB 114 would require districts to assume the same revenue as this year and prevent county offices from seeking evidence of financial stability for the next two years.”

There seems to be little doubt that CTA is behind this bill, which ultimately could spell disaster for many local school districts. The California School Boards Association is already starting to talk about counter legislation.

Regarding the other major new law, back in April, we wrote the following:

As of this writing, SB 48 very well may become law in California. According to the legislative analyst, this controversial bit of legislation “would require instruction in social sciences to also include a study of the role and contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and other ethnic and cultural groups, to the development of California and the United States.” To read the exact wording of the bill, go to http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb_0001-0050/sb_48_bill_20110329_amended_sen_v98.pdf

Last week, Governor Brown signed this CTA-supported bill into law. Hence, it would appear that curriculum and textbooks will undergo some rather interesting changes and SB 48 will most certainly be the topic of many a staff development come the fall.

One other legislative note from last week: The hotly debated Parent Trigger law, which needed some clarification, was addressed by the state Board of Education. The changes put forth were accepted and it would appear that this law originally signed into being by Governor Schwarzenegger in January 2010 will now proceed pretty much in tact.

Longtime LAUSD sub Rob Schmidt, has taken on some important work. He has been documenting cases of students who abuse teachers, and has created several videos which deal with this very sad issue. Thus far, Bill O’Reilly (Fox News) and John Phillips (KABC Radio) have covered Rob’s stories. A Los Angeles Television station has green-lighted a project based on the videos and would like to hear more personal accounts from teachers. So, if any of you have recent stories related to this subject or know someone who does, Rob would love to hear from you. Feel free to contact him at rob.schmidt@earthlink.net His website is www.RobSchmidt.org

Periodically, the National Council on Teacher Quality focuses on a given school district. In June, it was Los Angeles’s turn. They reported,

Probably the most jaw-dropping finding is LAUSD's approach to teacher raises. While all American school districts give raises to teachers who head back to graduate school, LA's approach is a new one on us. In LA, there's actually little incentive to earn a honest-to-goodness master's degree, but instead teachers accumulate what are deceptively termed "credits," which teachers earn for visiting the opera or the zoo during their off-hours. No wonder that so many teachers have reached the top of the pay scale in LAUSD--decidedly unlike any other district we've seen.

Is this really very different from the way your district handles teacher raises? (Perhaps this would be a good topic to discuss on the CTEN blog - <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com>) In any event, to read more about the study, go to <http://www.nctq.org/tr3/consulting/losangeles.jsp>

Also, in an article I wrote for *City Journal* - <http://www.city-journal.org/2011/cjc0707ls.html> - I contend that class size does not have an effect on student achievement. I suspect that some of you will take issue with my position, and invite you to post any comments on the CTEN blog for all to see - <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com>

Regarding our recent CTEN Survey Monkey poll, while many of your responses were pretty much what we had expected, one result however, was a bit of a surprise. Sixty-one percent of respondents said that they were full dues payers. Considering that almost 72 percent identified themselves as Republican or Libertarian, we would be interested in learning why those respondents would choose to stay in a union, paying for politics that don't reflect their views.

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please continue to provide feedback so that we can continue to keep you informed, provoke discussion and meet your needs. Thank you very much.

Larry Sand
CTEN President