



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.

July 16, 2014

Dear Colleague,

After the *Vergara* decision last month, the judge stayed his ruling pending an appeal by the teachers unions. However, there was still fallout. AB 1619 would have required school districts with fewer than 250 students to grant tenure to teachers after three years, but in light of *Vergara*, the bill died in the Senate education committee. Campbell Brown, a former CNN anchor who has become involved with education reform, launched the Partnership for Educational Justice in New York in December 2013. Inspired by *Vergara*, she has identified six children who have agreed to serve as plaintiffs, arguing they “suffered from laws making it too expensive, time-consuming and burdensome to fire bad teachers.” And then there was a USC poll, which among other things found that when asked about California’s teachers unions, “49 percent of voters said they have a “somewhat or very negative” impact on the quality of K-12 education, with 31 percent saying unions have a “somewhat or very positive” impact.” To read more, go to <http://unionwatch.org/post-vergara-rumblings/>

A second legal decision also has the unions livid. On June 30th, the Supreme Court agreed with the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation in *Harris v Quinn* and ruled that home care workers could not be forced to join the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Justice Samuel Alito did stop short of throwing out the 1977 *Abood* decision which allows unions to require nonmembers to pay fees for collective bargaining, as long as the dues are not used for ideological or political purposes. However, there is another case waiting in the wings which could lead the court to throw out *Abood* and make paying dues to a union optional nationwide. To read more go to <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/07/01/supreme-court-union-ruling-could-give-strength-to-teacher-suit?>

In the April letter we told you about a pending bill, AB 215, which was signed into law on June 25th by Governor Brown. The law streamlines the discipline and appeals process by expediting cases of serious misconduct, those involving sexual abuse, child abuse and certain drug offenses. While the legislation has its critics, it would seem to be an improvement over the mess that existed before. To read the new law, go to http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB215

The Common Core debate still rages. With accusations flying from both sides, it's important – as best as possible – to keep your eyes on the facts. Joy Pullman, research fellow of The Heartland Institute and managing editor of *School Reform News*, has some harrowing information about the costs of CCSS for Californians. She writes,

Back in 2011, the California Department of Education estimated phasing in the national curriculum and testing mandates would cost almost \$760 million. In 2013, lawmakers voted to spend \$1.25 billion for that purpose, almost twice the initial estimate.

Just a few months later, they're back for more. Assemblywoman Susan Bonilla, chair of the Assembly education spending committee, recently proposed sending schools another \$1.5 billion for the same purpose. If this bill passes, Common Core will have cost California taxpayers nearly four times as much as the state told them it would cost just three years ago.

To continue reading, go to <http://www.capoliticalreview.com/top-stories/californias-common-core-spending-never-ends/>

One of the side effects of Common Core has been a renewed look at “high stakes” testing, with people from both sides of the political spectrum arming themselves to do battle with those they feel are over-testing our kids. At times like this, it may be interesting to ponder, “What would libertarian sage Milton Friedman do?” And over at the NCPA blog, John Merrifield and Benjamin Scafidi do a good job of “asking” the late economist his opinion. To learn what they came up with, go to <http://educationblog.ncpa.org/what-would-milton-friedman-say-should-parents-be-allowed-to-opt-their-students-out-of-standardized-testing/>

The 2014 NEA convention has come and gone and there were no surprises. President Dennis Van Roekel's speech was boilerplate, trashing various bogeymen, including “corporate reformers like Democrats for Education Reform, Michelle Rhee, and the like.” Though Van Roekel didn't mention Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, the NEA did adopt the resolution which calls for Duncan to step down. The resolution blamed Duncan for a “failed education agenda” consisting of policies that “undermine public schools and colleges, the teaching education professionals, and education unions.” To read more, go to <http://www.politico.com/story/2014/07/arne-duncan-dismiss-resignation-call-national-education-association-108615.html>

Speaking of Duncan, he has unveiled a 50-state strategy last Monday “for putting some teeth into a requirement of the 12-year-old No Child Left Behind Act that has gone largely unenforced up until now: ensuring that poor and minority students get access to as many great teachers as their more advantaged peers.” So is this move yet another federal boondoggle? An idea whose time has come? Government overreach? All of the above? To read more about Duncan's plan, go to http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2014/07/arne_duncan_unveils_fifty_stat.html

And finally, there are a few school choice bills that have been flying under the radar, although the California Federation of Teachers picked up on the blip and mentioned them on their website.

We have recently learned that Senator Dianne Feinstein is considering two Senate bills, S. 1968 and S. 1909, that would have a devastating impact on public education in California and around the country.

Going into loopy mode, the union then proclaims:

These bills propose to siphon Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funds to private schools through a voucher system. Vouchers are nothing more than a vehicle for gutting school funding and for ultimately denying equal access to public education.

To track these two bills – and many others – go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/L?c113:/list/c113s.lst:1901>

CTEN also has two Facebook pages. If you have a Facebook account, we urge you to visit ours and let us know your thoughts. Having a dialogue among teachers is an effective way to spread information and share experiences and ideas. Our original Facebook page can be found here <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=125866159932&ref=ts> Our second page, which deals with teacher evaluation and transparency, can be accessed here - <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=126900987357825&ref=ts>

And we hope you are having a great summer!

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President