



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

August 19, 2008

Dear Colleague,

As mentioned in last month's letter, we realize that many of you are off on vacation and not in full teacher mode. Hence, our August letter will be brief but will be back in full force in September.

Vicki Murray of the Pacific Research Institute has released a fascinating study which estimates the annual direct and indirect costs of inadequate education to students, schools, and the state. While it is not a pretty picture to say the least, there are some fixes that would improve the situation. You can find this study on the PRI website -- <http://liberty.pacificresearch.org/publications/the-high-price-of-failure-in-california-how-inadequate-education-costs-schools-students-and-society>

And speaking of education reform, I recently had the privilege of meeting Patricia Kokinos. Educationally, she has done it all – teacher-of-the-year, administrator and then some (bio - http://www.changetheschools.com/bio_contact.html) She has written a well-received novel, *Angel Park* and has some very specific ideas about what needs to be done to effect meaningful change. To learn more about her provocative ideas, please go to -- <http://www.changetheschools.com/>

Also, if you have some ideas about how to improve our education system, a good place to have your ideas presented to the public is in the Educational Exchange newsletter, which is put out by the Alliance for School Choice and the State Policy Network. I am attaching their latest letter.

Unions have made the news regularly this summer; we will save the most relevant stories for the next letter. One thing worth noting now is that the Coalition Against Militarism in Our Schools (CAMS) -- <http://www.militaryfreeschools.org/> -- will be stepping up its efforts to get military recruiters off our campuses. In Los Angeles, this blatantly anti-military group is proposing to the LA Board of Education that they be allowed to visit schools as anti-recruiters. The union connection? Not only does the action have the support of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, CAMS itself came about as a sub-group of the UTLA's Human Rights Committee.

While it doesn't pertain to teachers - one other union story of note – there is pending legislation regarding workers ability to choose to unionize. The so-called Employee Free

Choice Act could have a major effect on the way unions organize in the years to come. George McGovern, former Democratic Senator from South Dakota, wrote an excellent op-ed about this in the August 8th Wall Street Journal http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121815502467222555.html?mod=opinion_main_comments

In any event, our next conference call for teachers who are interested in connecting with like-minded souls will be in September; details will be in next month's letter.

Hopefully your summer was all that you hoped it would be and that you are ready for those first few hectic weeks of school which will soon be upon us.

Larry Sand, President