



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

September 15, 2009

Dear Colleague,

Welcome back! By now all school districts in California are in session. We know that some teachers have been laid off, others have taken a pay cut and many will have to make do with fewer materials in their classrooms. While unfortunately we cannot help in the first two areas, we can perhaps help in the third. ***You will be receiving more information about this in a separate email in a few days. Please be on the look out for it!***

Also worth noting, if you have resigned from the union - choosing agency fee status, you can now file for your yearly rebate. To do so, you must have your letter postmarked by **September 30**. For those of you who choose not to file for the early rebate, you have until November 15 to submit your request. Please go to <http://tiny.cc/aXz4T> for a copy of the letter you must send to get your rebate.

In these tough economic times, we find it shameful that teachers' unions have raised their dues. You would think that the union elite would show some solidarity with its members by keeping dues at the 2008-2009 level or maybe even lowering them. Lest you be concerned that the CTA is having financial issues, their latest available tax form filed in 2008 can be seen at <http://tiny.cc/m4bVa>. On the very first page you will see that they took in almost \$200,000,000 in dues in 2007. Yes, each of you forked over \$600+ of your total dues to CTA, whether or not you wanted to. Also, it is interesting that the state education code mandates that the school district collect these dues. Ultimately, this means that it is the taxpayer who is footing the bill for the collection of these mandatory dues.

For those of you who are unhappy about CTA practices and policy but want to effect change from inside the union, why not run for the CTA State Council? You will need to be very persistent if you choose this course of action, because the people in power do not want any boat rocking. The voting for these positions is frequently done at out of the way locations at inconvenient times, which would explain why so few vote in these elections.

For example, in April, UTLA voted for their State Council representatives for the 2009-2012 term. Out of 36,000+ union members, only 295 voted. That comes to about $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1%! As such, one only needed 50% +1 or 149 votes to win a seat. The only good news

here is that if a small group of teachers collaborated, it wouldn't have to garner all that many votes to gain access to the State Council. It would take some effort, but it's clearly doable.

It would seem that charter schools are an idea whose time has come. The President backs them. The Los Angeles Unified School District has just passed a resolution allowing charter operators to bid for operating 200 of the districts lowest performing schools as well as 50 new schools. And in a recent Bloomberg poll, 64% of the public is now in favor of charters, up from 51% last year. To read the article, go to <http://tiny.cc/bFIUq>. There is much to understand about charters. If you would like to learn more, we suggest you visit the comprehensive Center for Education Reform website- <http://www.edreform.com/Home/>

There was a very disturbing story in the August 31 issue of *The New Yorker* about so called *rubber rooms* where bad, frequently criminal and occasionally falsely accused teachers go as they wait for their cases to be resolved. These teachers manage to hang on to the system with full pay because of legal loopholes, endless wrangling and inept or negligent school districts, sometimes for years at a cost of millions to taxpayers. We believe in due process, but the current system makes a mockery of this. Those who are not guilty need to return to their classrooms and those who are guilty should be fired. New York may lead the nation in rubber room denizens, but most districts have them and it is in everyone's best interest to speed up the justice system. To read this long and at times painful article, please go to <http://tiny.cc/j8sN7>

Sometimes wayward educators don't even get to a rubber room – they just get transferred to another school. This “Dance of the Lemons” is just what Steven Rooney experienced. Rooney, an assistant principal in Los Angeles sexually assaulted a female at his school and subsequently pulled a gun on a parent. He was not let go, but instead was transferred to another school, where he again sexually assaulted a student. Those of us who are truly interested in educating the next generation of Americans must do everything we can to ensure that what happened in this case never happens again. To read this grizzly story, please go to - <http://tiny.cc/JwpnS>

There are some interesting things going on with the state history framework - specifically the 7th grade World History curriculum. For a while now there have been several groups that have criticized the framework (and the textbooks that follow it) for sanitizing Islam, but at the same time showing Christianity and Judaism warts and all. These groups have been asking for a level playing field - that all religions should be portrayed accurately and fairly. The new framework is due very soon and we are very interested to see what, if any, changes are made. If there is anything to report on this story, we will follow up in the October letter.

If you were away over the summer and did not read the July and August letters, we urge you to do so. Summer is usually slow period news-wise but not in 2009. Please visit <http://www.ctenhome.org/newsletters.htm> to get caught up.

CTEN is now on Facebook! Please visit our page at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=125866159932&ref=ts>

CTEN has a board vacancy. If you would like to be a part of our decision-making body, please send a brief resume and letter telling us why you would like to be on our board, what you think you could contribute, etc. to cteninfo@ctenhome.org

The website has been updated recently. Please visit it at www.ctenhome.org As we are here to serve you, please let us know if there is something you would like us to post.

Finally, we hope that everyone has gotten off to a good start and that 2009-2010, despite all the fiscal turmoil, will be a great one for you and your students. And our sincere thanks for your continued interest and support.

Very best,

Larry Sand