



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

September 21, 2010

Dear Colleague,

Welcome back! By now all school districts in California are in session. We know that some teachers have taken a pay cut, and many will have to make do with fewer materials in their classrooms. And like last year, in spite of the very tight economy, your union dues will be going up.

The political season is in full swing and CTA will be spending much over the next six weeks on candidates and causes. If your politics don't happen to jibe with CTA's, or you don't think that a teachers' union should be spending money on issues that have nothing to do with teaching or education, you might want to consider not giving them the 30% or so of your dues that go toward politics. If you'd like more information about your options, please go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/know.htm>

If you are making this move, it is a two step process. First, you resign from the union, thus becoming an agency fee payer, and then request that the political part of your dues be returned to you. Sample letters for both steps are available here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/knowMembership.htm#exoptions> If you already are an agency fee payer, you must request your rebate this year (and every year!) by November 15th. If you are as much as one day late, you will not get a penny. Also, because liability insurance is important for teachers, we suggest joining the Association of American educators <http://www.aateachers.org/> or Christian Educators Association <http://www.ceai.org/> Both AAE and CEAI are professional organizations, not unions, and are apolitical. (Also, teachers who mention CTEN when they sign up with AAE for the first time will get a \$30 discount off the regular \$180 first year membership.)

If you are interested in seeing where a considerable amount of your union dues go, please read <http://unplugthepoliticalmachine.ning.com/profiles/blogs/public-sector-unions-amp> In this very hard-hitting article, Ed Ring explores the vast amounts of money that the teachers' unions and other public employee unions spend on politics in California.

The Association of American Educators has published an excellent booklet - *Powerful Failure: How the National Education Association fails to use its influence for education* which chronicles the development, growth, and politicization of the National Education Association. (<http://www.aateachers.org/images/pdfs/powerfulfailure.pdf>)

The \$10 billion “Edujobs bill” that flew through Congress in August, which was supposed to save teachers’ jobs, apparently has missed its mark... by a lot. The money seems to have been doled out without rhyme or reason. For example, “Maryland will get funds for 2,500 teaching jobs, but none of the largest districts (Baltimore, Montgomery or Prince George’s) were planning on laying off teachers this year.” For more, please read this story in the August 31 edition of the National Council on Teacher Quality Bulletin <http://www.nctq.org/p/tqb/viewBulletin.jsp?nlIdentifier=270#19630>

For those of you who are reform-minded, there is a week in January that will be devoted to alternatives to traditional public schools. January 23rd - 29th is National School Choice Week. To learn more and sign up to be a part of this event, please go to <http://schoolchoiceweek.com/>

CTEN now has two Facebook pages. If you have a Facebook account, we urge you to visit them and let us know your thoughts. Having a dialogue amongst teachers is an effective way to spread information and experiences and share 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>

If you were away over the summer and did not read the July and August letters, we encourage you to get caught up. Please visit <http://www.ctenhome.org/newsletters.htm> to do so.

Also, our 800 number (888-290-8471) was down for a while, but it’s up and running again. So if you have any issues you’d like to deal with by phone, please give us a call.

Finally, we hope that everyone has gotten off to a good start and that 2010-2011, despite the ongoing fiscal turmoil, will be a great one for you and your students. As always, sincere thanks for your continued interest and support.

Very best,

Larry Sand
CTEN President