



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

*Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues*

September, 18, 2012

*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,

Welcome back! By now all school districts in California are in session and we hope that the start of the school year has gone well for all of you.

Being an election year, there are many items on the ballot that will see CTA spending millions of your dues dollars on candidates and initiatives regardless of your preferences. Two initiatives the union will be focusing on are Prop. 30 and Prop. 32. CTA will be selling its positions and we will do our best to give you an alternate view. Unlike CTA, we will point out facts and let you make up your own mind. Regarding Prop. 30 – the official site advocating its passage is <http://www.yesonprop30.com/> – while for the anti-Prop. 30 forces, it's <http://defeat30.com/>. For *Yes on Prop 32* it's <http://yesprop32.com/> and for “No” it's - <http://www.stopspecial exemptions.org/> If you have any questions, send them our way and we will do our best to give you the spin-free facts. (At this writing, the *Yes on 32* forces are being outspent by over 10:1, with most of the *No* money coming from CTA.)

**If you are willing to speak publicly about Prop. 30 or Prop. 32, please let us know.**

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 percent 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 do decide to make 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.)

Concerned Educators Against Forced Unionism, the arm of the National Right to Work Legal Defense and Education Foundation that deals with educators, has a new website – <http://ceafu.org/> – which is well worth checking out. Among other things, it tells teachers how to get free legal aid, gives info about non-union professional educator groups, etc.

Common wisdom has it that we are spending less and less on education. However, the numbers don't bear this out. At the Heritage Foundation, Lindsey Burke reports, “Students headed back to school this fall will have **historically high levels of dollars spent on them in the public school system.** (Emphasis added.) Nationally, average per-pupil spending exceeds \$11,400 this year....” To learn more, go to <http://blog.heritage.org/2012/08/27/back-to-school-some-surprising-education-numbers/> And for a comparison of years past, go to the National Center for Education Statistics website for some surprising numbers – <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=66>

If you are unclear about what online learning is and isn't, “Fixing Our Schools,” a recent Juan Williams special, should be able to answer many of your questions. It's excellent, full of information and is a fast 42 minutes. To watch the video, go to <http://vimeo.com/47868845>

The National Council on Teacher Quality has an alarming report in its August newsletter. “States play an enormous role in setting the framework for teacher preparation programs. So enormous, in fact, that policies about teacher preparation comprise the largest section of our *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*. Unfortunately, it's also the area where state policies earn the lowest grade, averaging just a D.” To see how California compares to other states in teacher prep as well as identifying and retaining effective teachers, go to <http://www.nctq.org/stpy11Home.do>

In case you missed it, Assembly Bill 5 – after CTA and its friends went through major contortions to get it passed – died at the end of the legislative session on August 31<sup>st</sup>. The bill was an attempt to negate a judge's ruling in the Doe vs. Deasy case. Just about every newspaper in the state editorialized against the bill. The San Francisco Chronicle wrote,

*California is getting a lesson on how not to improve schools, courtesy of well-entrenched teacher unions. At issue are teacher evaluations based on student scores - a measuring stick that unions hate - and a pending state law that's been gutted to serve this labor group.*

*The state Senate has a last-ditch chance to reject the measure, AB5, which basically eliminates statewide requirements that student test results be used as one measure of teacher performance.*

*For years, California has lived with a mandate that teachers' performance be evaluated by a multitude of measures, including classroom tests, but this requirement was largely ignored. Student performance, no matter how abysmal, was never attributed to a teacher, even if year after year test scores suggested a problem in the classroom.*

To read the rest of the editorial, go to <http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/editorials/article/AB5-should-be-voted-down-3805501.php>

Recently, we sent you a couple of emails – one about how teachers can start up their own independent teacher association, the second about a lawsuit that could affect all teachers in CA. In case you missed these emails, I have pasted in the salient information at the end of this newsletter. If you contact either of the parties, please keep CTEN in the loop, via CC or separate email; it will help us keep track of our members' involvement.

CTEN 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 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.

Are you still using your school email address to receive these emails? If so, we suggest that you use your personal email address. More and more school email programs are blocking us.

Finally, despite our state's fiscal turmoil, we hope that 2012-2013 will be a great one for you and your students. As always, sincere thanks for your continued interest and support.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand  
CTEN President

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**A Better Model**

*The big teachers' unions have been taking from teachers for decades, often pushing policies that build their membership and power but don't necessarily improve working conditions or wages for the very teachers they claim to represent – let alone improve the educational system. The power of CTA in California seems too big, too entrenched to ever change. But what if there was a better model, and the shift to that model could happen one school district at a time?*

*In California, individual teachers can opt out of paying a portion of their union dues by becoming an agency fee payer. That can save a teacher hundreds of dollars a year, but they are still forced to pay as much as \$700 a year or more. Teachers who become agency fee payers also lose many benefits of union membership, including the right to vote on their contracts.*

*The Better Model is an independent public teacher association that controls its own destiny. By contracting out for expert legal and labor representation, but retaining for its members all policy and decision-making authority, teachers can easily save half of their current dues (\$500/year or more) and get better and more responsive representation than the big union model.*

*CTA apologists will say that such a model would be risky and leave the teachers unprotected by the vast resources of the statewide organization. The thing is that tens of thousands of California public employees are already doing it. Hundreds of public employee associations are independent - meaning, they are simply not attached to CTA, SEIU, AFSCME, or one of the other large national and international unions. Public employee associations represent California public employees that work for the state, counties, cities and special districts, including police officers, nurses, managers, firefighters, general employees, and everything in between. There are even public school teachers operating under this model, including traditional public and charter schools.*

*This model works. Ask around. Chances are that your local police officers' association or deputy sheriffs' association are not affiliated with a statewide or national union (though they probably belong to a lobbying organization and/or legal defense fund) and they pay substantially less than teachers do in dues.*

*The truth is that CTA and CFT have had a virtual monopoly of teacher representation in California. While we can debate the long term success or failure of such representation statewide and nationally, there is no doubt that locally, the big union model is not responsive, not independent...but it is very expensive.*

*California Independent Teachers was founded by labor and legal professionals that have been working for independent employee associations for decades. We know that this works; we make our livings from making sure that we provide superior value and responsive representation to our association clients.*

*If you are interested in talking to someone with CIT about their model and about the steps that need to be taken to decertify CTA in your district, go to [www.caindependentteachers.com](http://www.caindependentteachers.com) or call Rafael Ruano at (888) 993-1600.*

### **Students Matter Case**

*Students Matter was formed to bring an education reform case here in California. The purpose of the litigation is to remove barriers from the education code that make it*

*nearly impossible to identify and reward quality teachers and almost equally as impossible to remove those who persistently underperform. Students Matter believes so strongly in the critical importance of teachers to improving student achievement, we want to ensure that there is a quality teacher in every classroom.*

*We filed our case, Vergara v. California, on May 15 on behalf of eight students currently enrolled in California public schools. The case challenges three provisions of the education code: the process for granting teacher's permanent employment, mandated seniority-based layoffs, and teacher dismissal procedures. For more information, please visit the Students Matter website [studentsmatter.org](http://studentsmatter.org), where you'll find recent press coverage and editorials, and read the attached FAQ and statement of support from Los Angeles Unified Superintendent Dr. John Deasy.*

*The voices of courageous teachers who stand up for school reform help us bring attention to the issues at the heart of our case and ultimately help us help those who matter the most: students.*

*If you would like to get involved in any capacity, either through contributing your story to an op-ed piece, sharing your insight on background with reporters or simply passing our information along to interested friends and colleagues, please email Jaclyn Matthews at [jmatthews@griffinschein.com](mailto:jmatthews@griffinschein.com).*