



# 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.*

September 21, 2016

Dear Colleague,

Now that NCLB has been replaced by ESSA – the Every Student Succeeds Act – California is readying a new school rating system and a lot of people think it’s way too confusing.

*“... a number of parent activist groups and others are pushing the state board to adopt a summative rating for schools based on the chosen indicators and that without it, it will be difficult for families to compare schools or know how well their school is educating their students. They also point to the “sea of colors” on the proposed school report cards covering 17 categories, each of which is rated by one of five colors.*

*“In the absence of a summative rating for a school, it becomes very difficult for families to hold schools accountable for what happens within the walls,” said Seth Litt, executive director of Parent Revolution, an organization that helps parents push for better educational opportunities in their neighborhoods including using the “parent trigger” law to take over low-performing schools.*

A parent writes,

*California is finally going to measure every school based not only on test scores, but also on their school safety and climate, graduation rates and efforts to engage families. This new potential system, however, has been designed in such a way that it will be virtually impossible for most families to easily understand their school’s overall performance.*

*For example, the new system does not include any overall rating for each school. Instead, the plan is to give every family a report card with seventeen different categories, each of which is rated by one of five colors. Every family will have to look at this sea of colors and figure out for themselves whether their school is excellent, about average or low performing.*

For more on California's new rating system, go to - <http://laschoolreport.com/commentary-californias-proposed-school-rating-system-will-only-lead-to-confusion/> and <http://laschoolreport.com/la-parents-head-to-sacramento-for-this-weeks-vote-to-plead-for-a-single-number-to-assess-schools/>

“The teacher pay gap is wider than ever,” subtitled “Teachers’ pay continues to fall further behind pay of comparable workers” is a 29-page report released by the Economic Policy Institute, whose mission is “to inform and empower individuals to seek solutions that ensure broadly shared prosperity and opportunity.” But in fact EPI is nothing more than a union front group whose board includes AFL-CIO’s Richard Trumka, SEIU’s Mary Kay Henry, American Federation of Teachers’ Randi Weingarten, National Education Association’s Lily Eskelsen-García, et al.

Not surprisingly, the EPI report is flawed. Perhaps the most honest and well-researched study done on teacher pay, including the time-on-the-job and benefits factors, was done in 2011 by Andrew Biggs, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, and Jason Richwine, a senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation. In their report, they destroy the teacher union-perpetuated myth of the under-compensated teacher. Their study, in fact, found that teachers are actually paid *more* than private-sector workers.

To compare the two studies, go to - <http://www.epi.org/publication/the-teacher-pay-gap-is-wider-than-ever-teachers-pay-continues-to-fall-further-behind-pay-of-comparable-workers/> and <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/10/assessing-the-compensation-of-public-school-teachers>

California’s Prop. 55, which would extend the “temporary” tax hikes ushered in by Prop.30, would seem to be on track to pass in November. Many voters, including a majority of Republicans, are in favor of the initiative.

*Voters are also showing strong support for Proposition 55, a measure on the November statewide ballot that would extend for 12 years an income tax increase on individuals earning \$250,000 or more per year to help boost education and healthcare funding. Sixty-nine percent of voters showed support for the measure.*

To read more, go here - <http://laschoolreport.com/poll-californians-have-rosier-view-on-their-schools-and-want-to-fund-them-more/>

To read about teacher union spending on the prop, go here - <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-sac-essential-politics-updates-state-teachers-union-has-given-more-1470099940-htmlstory.html>

For a dissenting point of view, go to <http://www.city-journal.org/html/californias-temporarily-temporary-tax-14692.html>

One other initiative of note for educators is Prop. 56. If passed it would increase the cigarette tax by \$2.00 per pack, with equivalent increases on other tobacco products and electronic cigarettes. The tax revenue generated would go to “funding existing healthcare programs; also for tobacco use prevention/control programs, tobacco-related disease research and law enforcement....” However, opponents have a very different take. They say that, “California’s Constitution (through Proposition 98), requires that schools get at least 43% of any new tax increase. Prop 56

was purposely written to undermine our Constitution's minimum school funding guarantee, allowing special interests to deceptively divert millions a year from schools to health insurance companies and other wealthy special interests."

To read arguments – pro and con, go to <http://www.yeson56.org/> and <http://www.noonproposition56.com/cheats-schools/>

AB 2835 was birthed when CTA leaders were frightened that the *Friedrichs* decision was going to go against them. They decided they needed to carve out an opportunity to deliver a sales pitch to teachers who would no longer be forced to pay money to the union as a condition of employment. But with Antonin Scalia's death and the Supreme Court's subsequent refusal to rehear the case, the bill became irrelevant; CTA and CFT still have a captive audience.

The bill had sailed through the California State Assembly but didn't pass muster in the Senate and on Aug 31<sup>st</sup> it was sent to the inactive file. To learn more about the bill's history, go here - [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billHistoryClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201520160AB2835](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billHistoryClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB2835)

Did you know that Clovis, a city of about 100,000 located in California's San Joaquin Valley, home to the 16<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the state, with 41,000 students, 47 schools, and 1,800 teachers, functions without a teachers union? In fact, there has never been a teachers union in Clovis, but teachers nevertheless have a prominent voice and role in the district's governance. Instead of a union, they have an elected Faculty Senate, in which each school has a representative. The mission of the Faculty Senate is to be "an effective advocate for teachers at all levels of policy making, procedures, and expenditures, in partnership with our administrators, fellow employees, and community as a quality educational team." To learn more, please read my op-ed in the *Orange County Register* – <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/teachers-726147-clovis-california.html>

And on the subject of unions, **now is the time for agency fee payers to claim their rebate. Or if you are a full-dues payer but want to withhold the political share of your union dues, now is the time to get busy.** For details, go here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/how-to-opt-out-teachers-union-nea-cta-aft-cft.html>

And finally, as you well know, information is frequently used to score political points and make cases for various causes. To that end, CTEN has a "cheat sheet" on our website – with original sources. To see it, go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/cheatsheet.html> If you have information that counters what's there or would like to see something added, please let us know.

Anyone wishing to make a donation to CTEN can do so very simply through a personal check or PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.html> As a non-profit, we exist and operate only through the generosity and support of others. Many thanks to CTENers who have already donated and a special shout-out to those of you who do so on a regular basis.

Sincerely,  
Larry Sand  
CTEN President