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Our Purpose

To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.

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2010 Legislative Conference

Welcome to the new electronic Sacramento Update.

From the Director of Legislation

Is Our System Broken?

*By Debbie Look
Director of Legislation*

Faced with ever-increasing deficits and partisan gridlock in the Legislature, recent budgets have been chronically late and characterized by heavy cuts to government services, including education and critical programs for children and families. California State PTA is beginning to direct its attention to proposals for longer-term budget and tax reform.

Recent convention resolutions demonstrate our members' support for reform. In 2008, convention delegates passed a resolution calling on PTA to support legislative and ballot measure initiatives to reduce the threshold to pass a local parcel tax. A 2009 resolution directs PTA to advocate for a lowering of the vote requirement for passage of the state budget and revenue measures: Both resolutions call for a reduction from two-thirds to 55 percent or a simple majority for passage. Clearly, our members recognize the impediment that the two-thirds vote requirement imposes at both the state and local levels.

Parcel Taxes: Two efforts are currently underway to reduce the threshold for parcel taxes to a 55 percent supermajority. SCA 6 (Simitian) would allow school districts, community college districts and county offices of education to impose a new parcel tax, to extend or to increase a current parcel tax upon approval of 55 percent of the voters in the local area. The bill is currently awaiting a third reading on the Senate Floor. As it is a constitutional amendment, it requires a two-thirds vote of both houses to



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pass out of the Legislature. PTA has a SUPPORT position on this bill and will be working with the Senator as this bill moves forward. PTA is also supporting ACA 9 (Huffman) which proposes a similar change, but is broader in scope as it applies to other local public works projects, in addition to schools. Another effort underway is a ballot measure for the November 2010 election, Local Control of Local Classrooms Funding Act, which would authorize school and community college districts to adopt a parcel tax of no more than \$250 if it is approved by 55 percent of voters. A tax approved under this measure must include an annual, independent audit and the establishment of a citizens' oversight committee. California State PTA will discuss taking a position on this measure in January. For more information, go to www.improvedschoolfunding.com.

Lower the voting requirement for budget passage: A number of bills currently before the Legislature propose to reduce the two-thirds vote requirement for passage of the budget and/or revenue measures. These include ACA 4 (Bass), ACA 18 (Evans), SCA 5 (Hancock), SCA 9 (Ducheny) and SCA 15 (Calderon). Although none of these bills appears to be moving at this time, due largely to the difficulty of achieving the necessary two-thirds vote for passage, PTA will continue to work with these legislators.

Constitutional Convention: Finally, we are also looking at a number of ballot measures that are circulating on the issue of budget reform and related governance issues that may appear on the November 2010 ballot. Two groups have received considerable attention. Repair California (www.RepairCalifornia.org) is proposing two ballot measures; one would amend the constitution to give voters the right to call a Constitutional Convention and the second measure would call the convention. The measure would limit the convention to issues of governance, including the budget process, the election and initiative process, the relationship between state and local governments, and management of state bureaucracy. Convention delegates would not have the ability to propose any tax increases.

Another group, California Forward (www.caforward.org), is proposing specific ballot measures related to governance and budgetary reform for the



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November 2010 ballot: "Community Funding Protection and Accountability Act of 2010" and "The Best Practices Budget Accountability Act." Neither of these has yet received an official title and summary from the Attorney General.

California State PTA will continue to study bills and ballot measures on constitutional reform to determine where the advocacy efforts of our organization and our members would be best spent. We will keep you informed as we move forward on these important issues.

Stay tuned!

California Budget

**Governor's Proposed Budget
Imposes Additional Cuts on
Education, Devastating Cuts to
Other Important Programs**



*By Cecelia Mansfield
Legislative Advocate - Budget and Education Finance*

On January 8, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger released his proposed budget for 2010-11. Contrary to the Governor's pledge to protect education in his State of the State speech, his budget proposal actually reduces payments to schools by \$2.4 billion over two years. Total cuts to schools in the past two years will be \$17 billion and are disproportionate when compared to cuts made in other program areas of the state budget.

Proposed budget cuts would reduce Proposition 98 funding in the current year by \$892.6 million. Some of these proposed cuts would do the following:

- * Reduce funding for the K-3 Class Size Reduction Program.
- * Reduce general purpose funds for school districts and county offices of education.
- * Reduce Proposition 98 funding for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Juvenile Justice Division and State Special Schools.

* Reduce categorical funding.

The budget also includes deep cuts to health and human services programs vital to the health and well-being of California's children and families. These programs include drastic changes to the Healthy Families Program, CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Program), and Child Care and Development programs.

In addition, the Governor is asking the Legislature to implement a number of significant new education reforms that are sure to be controversial. Both the Assembly and Senate budget committees have already begun hearings on these proposals; legislators have 45 days, until February 22, to act.

With the budget proposal, the Governor declared a fiscal emergency and called the Legislature into special session to deal with a projected total shortfall of \$6.6 billion for the current year budget. The administration is also proposing that the Legislature place two measures on the June 2010 ballot, similar to last May's failed Proposition 1D and Proposition 1E. These new measures would redirect funds from Proposition 10 of 1998 and Proposition 63 of 2004 that are earmarked for child development and community mental health programs.

The Governor's proposed budget for 2010-11 seeks to address a projected gap of at least \$18.9 billion between spending and revenues - a \$6.6 billion shortfall in the remaining months of the 2009-10 fiscal year and a \$12.3 billion gap in fiscal year 2010-11 - without increasing taxes. He also proposes to end 2010-11 with a \$1 billion reserve.

To balance the budget the Governor uses "solutions" that rely heavily on spending cuts (43 percent) and efforts to secure additional federal dollars for California. If, however, efforts at securing federal funds are not successful, additional cuts would be triggered, as well as the extension of some temporary tax increases.

The California State PTA will be closely monitoring the legislative special session and will work with the Education Coalition and other allied partners to develop a comprehensive and coordinated response to the proposed

budget.

To learn more about the proposed state budget, please see the following websites: Department of Finance at www.dof.ca.gov; Office of the Legislative Analyst at www.lao.ca.gov; and the California Budget Project at www.cbp.org. A helpful new report from EdSource, School Finance 2009-10, is available at www.edsource.org.

Education

Update: Race to the Top

*By Patty Scriptor
Legislative Advocate - Education*

With all the excitement of a marathon, the California State Legislature worked through the holidays to pass legislation to support the state's application for Race to the Top funding (RTTT). At stake is a share of the \$4.35 billion in one-time federal RTTT funds, of which California could be eligible for as much as \$1 billion. After stops and starts, course changes and a final surge across the finish line, legislators agreed on three bills, including two that were joined.

As a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the U.S. Department of Education established a competitive grant program for education reform. These funds will be provided to eligible states to improve student outcomes and graduation rates, close the achievement gap and ensure student preparation for college and career.

In August, Governor Schwarzenegger called a special session of the Legislature to address Race to the Top eligibility. Two bills were created in the Senate: SBX5 1 (Romero) which called for sweeping reforms in order to make California more competitive, and SBX5 2 (Simitian) which made statutory changes required for eligibility to the state's data system. Both bills passed in the Senate, but were held in committee in the Assembly. Meanwhile, Assembly Education committee chairman Julia Brownley gathered input during hearings and crafted ABX5 8 (Brownley) which carried the Assembly's plan for RTTT eligibility.

Negotiations to join the Senate and Assembly bills began; sticking points

included charter school accountability, open enrollment, parent triggers, intervention models in struggling schools and the removal of the charter school cap. Eventually, ABX5 8 (Brownley) and SBX5 1 (Romero) became SBX5 1 (Steinberg), a bill that fulfilled the legislative requirements for the state's RTTT application. SBX5 4 (Romero) was introduced and carried two proposals - open enrollment and the parent trigger - that the author deemed necessary to make the state's grant application more competitive. The bills were double joined, meaning that both bills had to be passed and signed into law by the Governor in order for either of them to take effect. This tactic ensured that both pieces of legislation would be passed in order for California to meet the necessary requirements for an RTTT application.

Due to the tight timeline, PTA did not have official positions on the two final bills. However, the California State PTA did support the Race to the Top process and testified at hearings for both bills.

The main content of the bills is as follows.

SBx5 1 (Steinberg) - Race to the Top

- * Extends the sunset date for the STAR program from 2012 to 2013.
- * Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to recommend by January 1, 2011 approaches to increase the emphasis on science and mathematics in the API or any successor measure, incorporate a measure of students' preparation to attain entry-level employment, and increase preparation to succeed in postsecondary education.
- * Establishes a 21-member Academic Content Standards Commission.
- * Waives the 30-month timeline requirement between the adoption of criteria for instructional materials and the deadline for publishers to submit materials.
- * Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools - Requires the SPI and SBE to develop a list of the lowest 5 percent of schools; school districts will be required to implement one of four federally established turnaround

strategies for these schools unless certain conditions are met; allows an impacted school to partner with a mentor school that has successfully transitioned from a low-achieving to a high-achieving school.

SBx5 4 (Romero)

Open Enrollment

* The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall annually create a list of 1,000 low-achieving schools, ranked according to API with the same ratio of elementary, middle and high schools as existed in Decile 1 in the 2008-09 school year.

* Districts with identified schools shall notify the parents of students in those schools of their option to transfer to another school in the district or in another district.

Parent Empowerment

* Provides that where a majority of parents of students attending a school sign a petition, the school district shall implement one of the four federal turnaround options for that school.

Health

Governor's Budget Proposal Impacts Children's Health

*By Shayne Silva
Legislative Advocate - Health*

The Healthy Families Program provides healthcare coverage to children living near the poverty line. Funding of this important program will be drastically reduced, as one of the many budget cuts proposed by the Governor. Proposed budget cuts could also mean that 250,000 children will no longer be eligible for medical insurance coverage.

In addition, for the children who are allowed to remain in the program, vision coverage will no longer be available. Ultimately, there is a very real

possibility that the program will be totally eliminated if additional money isn't appropriated by the federal government.

Clearly, the goal for this legislative session will be to protect as many of the programs that support children's health as possible. This is never an easy task, and it will be even more difficult given the current budget problems.

California State PTA has taken a support position on AB 821 (Brownley). This bill asks school districts to use green cleaning supplies in classrooms. Cleaners used in schools often have chemicals that can cause asthma attacks and other health problems. Using green cleaning supplies will create a healthier environment for children.

In the October Sacramento Update, I reported that AB 627 (Brownley), a PTA-supported bill, was sitting on the Governor's desk; unfortunately, it was vetoed. This bill would have established a pilot program that outlined nutritional standards for childcare centers and appropriated additional monies for providing healthier meals.

Unfortunately, most bills that will pass during this legislative session will have little or no cost if their authors hope to see them signed into law. AB 627 (Brownley) is one example of cost dictating whether a bill is signed into law by the Governor or not.



Community Concerns

Razor Blades, Nitrous Oxide and Drain Covers

*By Patty Christiansen
Legislative Advocate - Community Concerns*

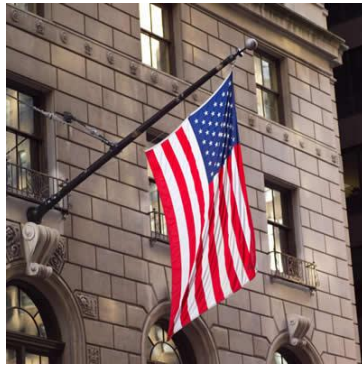
Three public safety bills made the cut and were signed into law by the Governor. New laws regulating razor blades on school campuses, nitrous oxide sold to youth, and anti-entrapment devices on swimming pool drains go into effect this year.

In recent years, box cutters and razor blades have emerged as the weapon

of choice among some school kids. They are inexpensive, easy to conceal and can deliver severe injuries. With the passage of AB 780 (Huber), razor blades and box cutters are now added to the list of weapons that are prohibited to be brought onto school campuses. California State PTA actively supported this bill.

Intended for home use to make whipped cream, "whippets" (small canisters of nitrous oxide) are the inhalants of choice among students, especially middle-schoolers whose use of inhalants now outpaces marijuana use. With the passage of AB 1015 (Torlakson), California law will prohibit the sale or gift of such nitrous oxide canisters to minors. Grocery store food products, such as whipped cream, will be exempt from this new law. PTA also supported this bill. Since 1985, more than 150 cases have been reported across the country of swimming pool drain entrapments, leading to at least 48 deaths and many serious injuries. Entrapment most commonly occurs when long hair or small limbs are sucked into powerful drains, making it impossible to swim to the surface of a pool. Many states have laws requiring anti-entrapment devices placed over drains. As AB 1020 (Emmerson) becomes law, California will now join these states in requiring existing public swimming pools to be equipped with anti-entrapment devices or systems.

As we move into a new legislative year, we feel the impact of the state's fiscal crisis on bills relating to community concerns. Bills requiring new budget allocations will be in short supply. However, the Community Concerns commission has set their priorities and will move forward to take an active role in bills that we can support. Commission priorities this session include foster youth, the achievement gap, assistance to families in need, media safety, gangs, safety in traveling to and from school and other traffic issues.



Parent Involvement

Register to Vote in the Next Election

By Michael Butler

Legislative Advocate - Parent Involvement

Parents, will your child be turning 18 sometime in 2010? Students, were you born in 1992? Are you registered to vote? You may register to vote if you are a U.S. citizen, a resident of California, and you are 18 years of age, or will be by the date of the next election. 2010 is an important election year with voters deciding on members of Congress and a number of statewide offices including Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The deadline to register to vote is 15 days before the date of the election. For the Primary Election on June 8, 2010, the deadline is May 24. For the General Election on November 2, 2010, the deadline is October 18.

Why wait? Pick up a voter registration form now and send it in.

You can download the form at www.sos.ca.gov/nvrc/fedform/ or you can pick one up at your county elections office, library, or U.S. Post Office.

For more information on voter registration in California, visit www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_vr.htm.

Education

Budget Deficit Threatens Key Education Developments

By Nancy Vandell

Legislative Advocate - Education

The state budget deficit casts a dark shadow over all areas of education. From arts education and counseling to physical education, every area is vulnerable to further cuts. Exciting developments are occurring throughout the education community, but innovation often requires additional funding. It is imperative that we convince both legislators and the public that they need to invest in children by increasing stable revenues for education and children's services. As an example, the California Department of Education

recently released the Multiple Pathways Report, which contains an exciting blueprint for reforming high schools to prepare students for 21st century careers. The report suggests that implementing the recommendations would cost approximately \$1,500 per student. It calls for partnerships with industry and universities, and could significantly improve the preparation of California's students to compete in the global economy.

To view the report, go to

www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/mps/print/htdocs/mps/home.htm, and click on the "Report Draft" tab.

Arts education funding, a high priority for California State PTA, is at risk. Did you know that California has content standards in the arts? The Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools were adopted in 2001 and can be found at www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/. Unfortunately, schools are not required to apply them or test for them, despite extensive research that proves that the arts have significant benefits in helping students become more creative and learn math and language arts. The arts can also be an outlet for children with special needs.

California State PTA was recently awarded a \$514,000 grant from the Hewlett Foundation to continue PTA's work to promote access to a complete curriculum that includes the arts for all students. A key to this activity is the development of advocacy skills for parents. Newly released are the draft School Library Standards for Students and the draft Model School Library Program Standards (view them at www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb/). The standards coherently address the changing requirements for students to work with resource materials in a variety of formats and technologies, both print and digital. They take a balanced approach of providing freedom to learn while taking measures to ensure that navigating the Internet and social networking sites is done safely, ethically and analytically.

With looming severe cuts to key programs, the need to advocate for permanent, stable revenue increases has never been higher.

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