

Special Session Called by Governor to Act On Proposed Cuts to 2001-02 State Budget

Lawmakers returned to Sacramento on January 7 and began to grapple with the reality of dramatic changes in California's economic outlook since last fall. The Legislature and the Governor must act quickly to address an extraordinarily rapid decline in state revenues and to avoid ending the 2001-02 fiscal year with a deficit that the office of the independent Legislative Analyst estimates could reach \$4.5 billion. The current budget assumed a \$2.6 billion reserve. To balance the budget adopted in July, the Legislative Analyst has called for substantial ongoing spending cuts and/or revenue increases.

On November 14 Governor Davis responded to the growing crisis by announcing a proposed downward revision of the 2001-02 state budget and ordering a temporary freeze in the allocation of current year expenditures, pending the necessary approval by the Legislature. The proposed cuts total \$2.248 billion, with reductions to the K-12 education budget of \$843.5 million – an amount equal to 37.5% of the suggested cuts. These cuts are in addition to earlier actions to balance the budget in the wake of a slumping state economy.

Governor Davis will immediately convene a Special Session of the Legislature to take up his suggested budget revisions and to consider and act on other reductions or new taxes. In the meantime, the freeze has delayed the implementation of many new programs supported by the California State PTA and other children's advocates and education associations. The following is a summary of the

Governor's proposed reductions in current year spending as they relate to children. The full document is available at www.dof.ca.gov.

- **Healthy Start** — leaves \$1 million (from \$39 million) in Proposition 98 General Funds for new sites.
- **K-12 Equalization Funding** — suspends \$40 million for the equalization of district revenue limits until further appropriation in another Budget Act.
- **Before/After School Expansion** — delays the \$29.7 million implementation of the new program expansion, pursuant to AB 6.
- **Low Performing Schools** — delays to 2002-03 implementation of the \$197 million new program for low performing schools to improve academic performance.
- **Beginning Teacher Support** — reduces from \$104.6 million to \$84.6 million a program to provide mentoring and support to new teachers.
- **Peer Assistance and Review** — reduces from \$134.2 million to \$84.2 million for the mentoring of veteran teachers.
- **National Board Certification** — reduces by \$5 million for incentives to teachers that become National Board Certified.
- **Teaching as a Priority** — reduces by \$20 million incentives for fully credentialed teachers to work in low performing schools.

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- **Certified Staff Performance Awards** - reduces by \$50 million performance awards to staff in schools that achieve sustained growth in their Academic Performance Index (API) score
- **Professional Development Institute Stipends** – reduces from \$54 million to \$48 million for teachers to attend professional development institutes.
- **High Tech High Schools** — reduces from \$10 million to \$6 million for the high tech grant program in high schools.
- **Digital High Schools** — reduces from \$76 million to \$61 million for technical support and professional development in participating high schools.
- **Energy Relief** — elimination of the one-time \$250 million fund to help schools with their energy costs.
- **9th Grade Class Size Reduction** — reduces from \$145.2 million to \$135.2 million for the reduction in core classes to a 20:1 student to teacher ratio.
- **Healthy Families** — delays the implementation of expansion to parents with an income under 250% of federal poverty level to July 2003.

In the coming weeks, the California State PTA will be closely monitoring the special session and working with our allies in Sacramento,, primarily with members of the Children’s Advocates Roundtable and the Education Coalition, to mitigate the effects of the state’s fiscal crisis on California’s children and families. The proposed cuts in school funding are of particular concern at a time when California school funding continues to lag behind most other states. Virtually everyone recognizes that budget cuts are inevitable but should be as far away from the classroom as possible. However, we must strive to maintain momentum on education reform efforts and to honor our commitment to low performing schools and to our most needy children.

Although the Legislative Analyst Elizabeth Hill is projecting a \$12.4 billion shortfall for fiscal year 2002-03, there is some good news on the horizon. She believes that the current dive in state revenues will be relatively short-lived, with a rebound that will bring significant gains in revenue beyond next year. Governor Davis will release the 2002-03 proposed budget on January 10.

Cecelia Mansfield, Director of Legislation



School Bond Update

Even in these uncertain economic times, voters seem willing to pass school bonds. Across the state in 2001, in the first widespread local bond elections since the passage of Proposition 39 lowered the vote threshold from two-thirds to 55 percent, voters approved 44 of 52 bond measures. They passed five out of six measures on March ballots, nine of 14 measures on May to October ballots, and all but two of 32 measures on November ballots. The largest successful bond measure, \$430 million in Riverside County, passed by a 4-to-1 margin. Altogether, voters approved \$4.5 billion in local school bonds.

Although a statewide school facilities bond measure was not approved for the March 2002 ballot, it is almost certain that a bond measure to provide the state’s share for new classrooms and school modernization will be on the November 2002 ballot. The Legislature and the Governor have not yet agreed on the amount and other details such as the split between K-12 and higher education.

2001 Legislative Recap

Governor Davis signed a total of 948 bills in 2001, with 801 taking effect on January 1, 2002. See *It’s the Law!* in the January 2002 issue of the *Communicator* for a listing of the PTA supported and approved legislation that was passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor.

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Good News/Bad News on Education Bills

The end of the 2001 Legislative Session brought both good news and bad news for PTA-supported education bills. Good news: The Governor signed **AB 961** (Steinberg) to establish the High Priority Grant Program for Low-Performing Schools. (See the October 2001 issue of the *Sacramento Update* for a summary of the provisions of AB 961.) The bad news is that the Governor is proposing to delay the implementation of AB 961 until 2002-03.

Bad news: The Governor vetoed **AB 50** (Hertzberg/Migden), which would have extended the Schiff-Bustamante Instructional Materials Program to 2005-06, with an annual appropriation of \$250 million. The Governor indicated that his administration has already allocated \$2.3 million for books and instructional materials, and much of this has not yet been spent. The Governor also stated, "Given the rapid decline of the economy and a budget shortfall of \$1.1 billion through the first three months of this year alone, I had no choice but to oppose additional General Fund spending." PTA was instrumental in the passage of AB 2041 (Chapter 312, Statutes of 1998), which established the Schiff-Bustamante Standards-Based Instructional Materials Fund and strongly supported continuation of the program.

Good news: The Governor signed **AB 1609** (Calderon), which makes amendments to the implementation of the High School Exit Exam. The good news for students is that they will not be taking the exam until the tenth, rather than the ninth, grade. The good news for students, parents and public policy makers is that the bill requires a study to be conducted to determine how well the state is preparing students to pass the exam and gives the State Board of Education, until 2003, the authority to delay the requirement to pass the High School Exit Exam in order to graduate from high school.

More news on testing: The Governor signed **SB 233** (Alpert), which makes a number of changes to the State's testing program, including a new definition of "core curriculum" and the development and distribution of test preparation workbooks. However, there are still many unresolved issues surrounding the testing program, such as the English Language Development (ELD) test and the amount of time students spend preparing for and taking required tests. These issues will most likely result in further legislation in 2002.

Ann Desmond, Education Advocate

Requirement for Seat Belts on School Buses Delayed

The move to require seat belts on California's school buses was pushed back by more than three years with a sweep of Governor Davis' pen on October 8, 2001, and could be dead for good. Governor Davis signed a bill setting a 2005 deadline for larger buses and a 2004 target for others. Two years after signing a bill that would have required lap and shoulder restraints on all new school buses purchased after January 1, 2002, the Governor approved another measure delaying the requirement. Under **AB 568** (Morrow), new school buses must begin adhering to the requirement in mid-2004. Because a long-awaited federal study on seat belts on school buses has not been completed, state lawmakers opted to wait for the findings before moving forward with the requirement. The federal study is supposed to develop recommendations and performance standards for protection systems on school buses. In 1999, when Governor Davis signed the original seat belt law, he warned that he would seek to postpone the starting date of the new requirement if results of the study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) were delayed. The results of the study are not expected until sometime in 2002. Researchers have disagreed for years about the safety of seat belts on school buses. Many parents say we are teaching our children a double standard: seat belts in cars, but not on school buses or even on other buses.

Five bills requiring seat belts on school buses were defeated in the State Legislature before one was approved in 1999. Under the legislation approved October 8, 2001, by the Governor, the seat belt requirement will be scrapped completely if NHTSA decides to prohibit seat belts on school buses as a result of its findings.

A reminder from the California Highway Patrol: As of January 1, 2002, booster seats are required for children under age six or weighing less than 60 pounds.

Peggy Dial, Community Concerns Advocate

Assembly Leadership Changes

Due to legislative term limits, the California State Assembly will welcome new leadership in February 2002, as follows:

Speaker of the Assembly: Herb Wesson
Majority Leader: Marco A. Firebaugh

DC Corner

ESEA Is Reauthorized: Finally!

Parent Involvement Included in ESEA

National PTA legislative advocacy efforts throughout the past year focused mainly on issues in reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and on increased funding for federal education programs. The ESEA reauthorization bill that finally passed both houses of Congress in December is a compromise version of H.R. 1, the Leave No Child Behind Act. President Bush is expected to sign it in early January. PTA supported enactment of the final package because it contained several important reforms, including enhanced parent involvement provisions, increased funding authorizations, and improved targeting of federal funds to the most needy communities.

Though not all of the PTA issues were satisfactorily addressed in the ESEA bill, many of PTA's advocacy efforts were successful. One of the most significant victories for PTA was the parent involvement component in the new ESEA bill. Three years ago, National PTA initiated the PARENT Act, which sought to strengthen parent participation policies in ESEA. Most of the PARENT Act provisions were included in the Senate ESEA bill and these reforms were retained in the final ESEA agreement. Also, for the first time, ESEA now defines parent involvement, based on National PTA's *National Standards for Parent and Family Involvement*.

Another significant victory was increased funding for Title I and other ESEA programs, and changes to the Title I grant programs that will improve targeting services to children in poverty. Title I, the largest of ESEA programs and the cornerstone of federal aid for education, is intended to provide for services to improve the educational performance of children from low-income families in high poverty schools. The level and distribution of Title I funding is a critical issue, particularly for states like California. Shifts in formulas to allocate funding based on children in poverty, rather than on all children, should benefit California with its higher than average child poverty rates.

A 1200 page (4 MB) pdf file of the ESEA bill text can be viewed or downloaded from the Education & Workforce website, <http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/107th/education/nclb/conference/leglanguage/leglanguage.pdf>.

Education Funding Bill Passes

Just before adjournment on December 20, the House and Senate completed work on the remaining FY 2002 appropriations bills, including the Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education bill. Congress also approved a continuing resolution to maintain federal funding at FY 2001 levels until it reconvenes on January 23, 2002, giving the President time to review and sign the newly passed bills.

The appropriation for Education includes a record \$6.7 billion increase over last year. This funding will provide much-needed support for a wide range of federal education programs, but the total is still short of what is needed to fully support the major policy changes in the new ESEA reauthorization bill. For example, \$10.3 billion is appropriated for Title I grants to school districts – a \$1.6 billion or 18 percent increase over last year, but below the \$13.7 billion authorized in the new ESEA bill. Grants for Special Education are funded at \$7.52 billion, which is a \$1.2 billion increase; but falls short of the \$2.5 billion increase that was debated during ESEA negotiations and well short of full funding. The administration's literacy programs are funded at \$900 million for the new reading program and \$12.5 million for a new school libraries program, and there will be \$300 million for teacher quality and development.

National PTA supports the bipartisan funding bill and believes it "demonstrates a continued commitment to education as a national priority. PTA will continue to fight for an increased federal investment in education to ensure that all children have equal access to quality education services." For more information on education funding check the National PTA's members' website: <http://www.pta.org>.

California's share of federal education funds may increase somewhat. According to Senator Feinstein's office, California should receive \$300 million more for Title I programs than it did in FY 2001. This represents a 26 percent increase, while the national average increase is about 21 percent for Title I grants. A complete analysis of the California aspects of the appropriations bill is available on the California Institute website in text format at: <http://www.calinst.org/pubs/lhe02c.htm>. A printable version in pdf is also available at <http://www.calinst.org/pubs/lhe02c.pdf>.

Betty DeFea, Federal Advocate

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The California State PTA continues to monitor funds awarded to the state of California under the federal Tobacco Settlement to ensure that these funds are spent on programs that address health issues and the promotion of anti-smoking campaigns.

Michael Butler, Health Advocate

E-Rate Program Update

A recently released report on the E-Rate program, which provides schools and public libraries with discounted telecommunications services, such as Internet access, finds that the percentage of schools with Internet access has risen from 35 percent to 98 percent. However, a divide remains between low- and high-poverty schools. The report notes that only 60 percent of instructional classrooms in the highest poverty schools have Internet access, compared to 80 percent in the lowest poverty schools. Also, the overall ratio of students per computer has dropped to five to one, but the ratio in high poverty schools is nine to one.

Recommendations include improving the program by lifting the funding cap from the current level of \$2.25 billion, conducting outreach, and providing technical assistance to schools in low-income communities. Other suggestions include allowing states greater freedom to fund other areas of education technology, such as professional development and program evaluation. The full report can be viewed at:

Betty DeFea, Federal Advocate

Protecting Children from Exposure to Tobacco

National PTA and the California State PTA have a long history of opposition to tobacco use and second hand smoke exposure to teens and children. A number of bills relating to tobacco and children were introduced during the 2001 Legislative Session. PTA advocated for one of these bills:

AB 188 (Vargas) prohibits the smoking or disposal of tobacco products within a playground or toddler sandlot area. Although this bill originally specified fifty-foot boundaries around playground areas, this was compromised along the way. The Governor, in signing AB 188, requested the author to immediately seek to carry legislation that would extend the boundaries only 15-25 feet. "Smoke-free boundaries will create a reasonable distance to protect our children while allowing parents who smoke to remain close enough to monitor them while they play," wrote the Governor. PTA had an approve position on AB 188.

REMINDER:

**California State PTA
presents**

BUILDING GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY



**California State PTA 2002 Annual
Legislation Conference**

January 30 - February 1, 2002

**Sheraton-Grand Hotel
Sacramento**

Conference registration: \$125 includes all conference activities and materials, including dinner on Wednesday, lunch and reception on Thursday, breakfast on Friday.

For information on registration and further information on the conference agenda, please contact the California State PTA Sacramento Office at (916) 442-5667.

SMARTS: Bring Back the Arts Advocacy Update

Our Awareness and Advocacy Campaign is WORKING!!!! Thanks to PTA members throughout the state, the California PTA has been highly successful in focusing the attention of policy makers on the importance of the arts to education and to the lives of children. The most recent public opinion study by the California Arts Council finds that 75 percent of those polled believe the arts improve the academic performance of children. You can download a copy of the survey at http://www.cac.ca.gov/load/Public_Opinion_Survey.pdf

Our PTA supported bill, **AB 869** (Shelley), to fund arts materials, supplies, and professional development, is high profile legislation that tells legislators the PTA is serious. We are especially pleased with the strong bi-partisan support this bill received. Unfortunately, this bill, along with many, many others, was caught in this past year's funding crunch. We will continue to support legislative action on this and other arts bills this year and in the coming years. *We will continue to need support from PTA members throughout the state in this effort.*

Grass Roots Arts Advocacy Project

SMARTS: BRING BACK THE ARTS is a broad-based advocacy effort, not only supporting legislation in Sacramento, but also grass roots advocacy in local communities. The upcoming California State PTA Legislation Conference in Sacramento will kick-off the next phase of our advocacy effort. PTA leaders attending conference will receive the new "Community Arts Education Project," created by the California State PTA and the California Alliance for Arts Education (CAAE). This is part of an unprecedented effort to support arts education in a time of looming budget cuts. It will help local schools and school districts to determine the current state of arts education, will provide communities with accurate information about arts education, and will enable parents to advocate for quality arts programs in their children's schools. The Community Arts Education Project will also be shared with local, state and national elected officials to help them make informed policy decisions.

Carol Kocivar, Education Advocate

Education Bills Await Appropriations Outcome

A number of PTA "supported" education bills were held in appropriations committee this past year as the impact of the recession put a hold on many proposals. Here is a summary of the bills that are still in funding limbo. Reports on funding from Sacramento do not at this point look promising.

AB 301 (Strom-Martin) would allow up to seven days for staff development for certificated classroom teachers or in the case of a charter school, for classroom teachers.

AB 323 (Pavley) would allow school districts and county offices of education to establish extended-day kindergarten programs.

AB 634 (Wesson) would provide a minimum age of 5 for compulsory school attendance unless exempted, or unless, for children between the ages of 5 and 6, a waiver is requested by the parent or guardian and is properly completed and delivered to the local school district governing board.

AB 741 (Firebaugh) would reappropriate \$150,000 to conduct a study to determine whether the appropriation made by Proposition 227 for those purposes is being allocated and used in a way that meets the goals and objectives of Proposition 227.

AB 869 (Shelley) would establish the Arts Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Assistance Program until June 30, 2006.

SB 29 (O'Connell) would allow specialized secondary school programs operated by a county superintendent of schools or a county board of education to participate in the class size reduction program and allow pupils enrolled in necessary small schools to be included in the enrollment figure in each class designated for class size reduction.

SB 33 (Soto) would delete the sunset date for the Nell Soto Parent/Teacher Involvement Program and would allocate one-time grants to schools to strengthen communication between schools and parents.

Carol Kocivar, Education Advocate