

Governor Proposes \$10.2 Billion In Budget Adjustments Legislature Called into Special Session

On December 3 Governor Davis called a Special Session of the Legislature to consider a package of budget cuts, recaptures and other budget adjustments totaling \$10.2 billion (\$3.4 billion in 2002-03 and \$6.8 billion in 2003-04), which he released on December 6. The Governor's proposals to partially address the enormous budget shortfall facing California include:

- \$2.038 billion in 2002-03 spending reductions;
- \$6.620 billion in 2003-04 spending reductions;
- \$815.6 million in fund shifts over the two-year period;
- \$699.7 million in transfers and other revenues over the two-year period;
- \$25.4 million in 2002-03 loans; and
- No increased taxes and modest fee increases.

The largest reductions are slated for transportation, education, and local government.

Although the Special Session began on December 9, the Legislature is not expected to act on mid-year spending reductions or other options for closing the budget gap before the Governor's proposed budget for 2003-04 is unveiled on January 10, and probably not before the end of January. The budget gap estimated last fall to be \$21 billion for the current year and 2003-04, is now estimated by the Office of the Legislative Analyst and the Department of Finance to be more than \$30 billion. The Legislative Analyst has characterized the current shortfall as "much more formidable and challenging" than last year because of the magnitude of the problem and because a number of one-time solutions used last year are no longer available.

The leadership of California State PTA has been very involved in public relations and lobbying activities that reflect both the short-range and long-range strategies developed by PTA and other members of the Education Coalition, including CSBA, ACSA, CSEA, CTA and CFT. As part of the short-range strategy the Coalition also ran full-page ads on two different days in the *Sacramento Bee*, met with key legislative staff, and participated in press conferences in Sacramento and other important media markets. These activities have helped to educate policymakers and the public about the devastating effect these cuts would have on the classroom.

Long-term strategies that will involve our grassroots will come into focus in the coming weeks.

PTA and our education allies will be advocating for targeted cuts and/or deferrals in the current year, rather than across-the-board cuts, that would protect Proposition 98 base funding. PTA will also be advocating for a long-term solution that takes into account the need for new revenues in addition to cutting expenditures.

The California State PTA is working with other coalitions concerned about programs that are critical to California's children and families, like health services and childcare.

Cecelia Mansfield, Director of Legislation

SMARTS: Bring Back the Arts Advocacy Up-date

Now, more than ever, the efforts of PTA members throughout the state are vital to the support of quality arts education for California school children. Everyone knows the story: When budgets get tight, the arts get cut. And boy: The budget is more than tight.

At the state level, the PTA is working closely with the California Alliance for Arts Education to support legislative efforts to maintain and increase the arts in our schools. We will be sponsoring another bill to support instructional materials for arts in the schools. The purpose of this bill is to very specifically let school districts and parents know that instructional materials funding can be used for visual and performing arts. We are now in the process of working with legislators who may author the bill. Look for our updates on the bill number and author. We will need everyone's help. This is our third effort supporting instructional materials legislation.

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 our children. We are especially pleased with the strong bi-partisan support our efforts have received.

At the local level, it is even more important for PTA leaders to implement the Community Arts Education Project. This unique 23-page strategy manual to support quality arts education in public

schools can be downloaded from the PTA web site at www.capta.org. This will help local schools and school districts determine the current status of arts education. It will help provide communities with accurate information about arts education and enable parents to advocate for quality arts programs in their schools. As school districts make very important decisions on program funding, this advocacy tool will help you support the arts in the schools.

Carol Kocivar, Education Advocate



Class Size Reduction: How many kids will it take to balance the budget?

Look for Class Size Reduction to be the target of legislative efforts to balance the budget. Presently, the cost to the state to keep our K-3 classrooms at 20 or fewer students is about \$1.6 billion. The California State PTA was a major player in the creation of this program.

The California Class Size Reduction program is one of the most successful and significant school reforms in decades. It is based on a simple premise, supported by solid research: Smaller classes help children do better in school.

Class size reduction was implemented in 1996 in California in response to lagging test scores and breakthrough research in Tennessee showing that students in small classes did better academically. In California in the 1990s, class size in kindergarten through third grade had crept up above 30 students to one teacher at far too many schools. CSR does not require school districts to reduce class size, but rather uses financial incentives to encourage them to reduce the number of students in K-3 classes to no more than 20 students per teacher. This year, the state budget allowed schools about \$906 per student in classes reduced to 20-1. These funds pay some of the cost of Class Size Reduction, but nearly all school districts have to budget additional funds to complete the costs.

In December, ACSA announced two class-size reduction flexibility proposals:

Soft-cap: Authorize the calculation for CSR to be based on a district or site average of 20-1 with no class exceeding 22. (The PTA reviewed its position last year and opposed this class size creep to 22 students per class.)

Roll Back Flexibility: Allow districts to select which CSR grade level to reduce or eliminate. This proposal is encompassed in **AB 42** (Daucher).

Expect proponents for changing CSR to cite the recent report from the California CSR Research Consortium that found the relationship of CSR to student achievement to be inconclusive. The facts are that student achievement has been increasing since the first administration of the SAT-9 in 1998. (CSR started in 1996.) Unlike the carefully designed and controlled scientific study of CSR in Tennessee, CSR in California was implemented rapidly, without

(continued on the next page)

control groups. If you don't set up good research, it is hard to make scientific conclusions. The CSR report notes: We could not determine whether our inability to link CSR to achievement was due to weaknesses of the incremental differences in CSR or design limitations (or a combination of both) We were also limited in our ability to determine how much of the recent gain in achievement was attributable to CSR and how much was linked to other initiatives.

Carol Kocivar, Education Advocate

California Maintains Tough Stance on Tobacco in 2002

In the year just concluded, one bill designed to strengthen laws that prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors passed the legislature and was signed by the governor. **AB 1830**, (Frommer) prohibits the sale of tobacco products to minors through the United States Postal Service (USPS) or through any other public or private postal or package delivery service. To help ensure that minors are not buying cigarettes through the mail, the bill requires a specified distributor or seller, among other things, to verify that a purchaser of tobacco products is 18 years of age or older, and to telephone the purchaser after 5 p.m. to confirm the order prior to shipping the tobacco products. The distributor may access a database of individuals who have had their age verified as being

18 years or older; or the distributor may have the purchaser submit an age-verification kit consisting of an attestation signed by the customer, along with a copy of a valid form of government identification such as a driver's license or passport. AB 1830 further imposes a two-carton minimum on each order of cigarettes only, and requires that the distributor or seller shall deliver the tobacco product to the purchaser's verified billing address on the check or credit card used for payment. California State PTA had an approve position on AB 1830.

Another bill that was passed and signed by the governor was designed to strengthen the law protecting children from the harmful effects of second hand smoke around playgrounds. **AB 1867**, (Vargas) increases the fine from \$100 to \$250, and would expand the prohibited smoking and disposal area from 15 feet to within 25 feet of a playground or a tot lot sandbox area. California State PTA had an approve position on AB 1867.

Michael Butler, Health Advocate

Bills Introduced to Implement Master Plan for Education

The first year of the new two-year session of the California State Legislature officially began on December 2, 2002, and reconvened for business on January 6, 2003. So far, just a handful of legislative bills have been introduced. Three of these bills would implement portions of the legislature's newly approved Master Plan for Education.

AB 56 (Liu and Daucher) and **SB 7** (Alpert and Karnette) are identical omnibus bills that address school readiness. These bills would make kindergarten attendance mandatory for five year olds, and would phase in full-day kindergarten classes. The bills would also establish the School Readiness Program to provide grants to agencies both to help prepare young children for school and to help prepare schools become ready to teach young children. By introducing the bills simultaneously into both houses of the Legislature, senators and assembly members will be able to work together to craft a comprehensive school readiness program.

SB 6 (Alpert) is an omnibus bill on education governance, which would redistribute and redefine responsibilities for educational accountability among state, regional and local entities. Among other provisions, SB 6 would

- place responsibility for the Department of Education under the Governor;

- assign responsibility for performance monitoring, reporting and advocacy to the Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- establish a California Education Commission, which would be responsible for compiling data and providing analysis relating to the public education system as a whole; and
- eliminate overlapping responsibilities and authority now exercised by multiple entities.

The Legislation Action Committee will be studying these and other Master Plan bills at its meeting in February.

Another bill the committee will study in February is **AB 36** (Wyland), which would encourage the governing boards of local school districts to discuss STAR test scores and to analyze the results of those assessments. AB 36 is almost identical to last year's AB 2627 (Wyland), which was vetoed by the Governor. However, AB 36, unlike AB 2676, does not impose a mandate on school governing boards. PTA had a support position on AB 2676.

Ann Desmond, Education Advocate

News Flash!

PROP. 47 SCHOOL BONDS GO TO WORK

SACRAMENTO – Thanks to the passage of Proposition 47, the statewide school bond measure, the State Allocation Board today approved funding for more than 2,000 school projects statewide.

“In passing Prop. 47, voters told us to keep education a priority, and they gave us the tools to make much-needed repairs and reduce overcrowding at schools across California,” said Wayne Johnson, president, California Teachers Association.

Proposition 47 provides \$13.05 billion in bonds for making safety improvements and other repairs to existing schools, and for the construction of new classrooms -- in California's elementary, middle and high schools, as well as community college, CSU and UC campuses. Prop. 47 is the first of two statewide school bond measures to provide this “bricks and mortar” money. The second will be on the March 2004 ballot.

“We're very pleased to see these bonds put to work so quickly,” said Kathleen Moore-Baratta, Chair, Coalition for Adequate School Housing. “In fact, we expect that some districts will be breaking ground on projects before spring break next year. And of course, doing this work to improve our schools, also brings economic benefits for our state. It's been estimated that all of the work which Prop.

47 will fund, will create more than 250,000 new jobs – and that’s certainly welcome news.”

School districts from nearly every county in the state received funding for school repairs and new construction today. A complete list of projects can be found at www.opsc.dgs.ca.gov.

“We said during the campaign that Proposition 47 was a solid taxpayer investment,” said Larry McCarthy, president, California Taxpayers’ Association, “today we’re seeing the first returns on that investment. And Prop. 47 ensures that districts use these funds cost-effectively and subject to strict accountability procedures so that taxpayers can be confident this will be money well-spent.”

Proposition 47 was supported by a broad-based coalition which included the California State PTA, California Teachers Association, California Taxpayers’ Association, California School Boards Association and the California Labor Federation (AFL-CIO), among many others. Prop. 47 passed in the November 5th election with 59 percent of the vote statewide.

California State PTA presents

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www.capta.org

DC Corner

108th Congress Goes to Work...

The 108th Congress begins its work in Washington, DC, this month. On the agenda will be a number of unfinished items left over from the 107th Congress, which when it finally adjourned in November, had failed to complete several important tasks, including the Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education appropriations bill for FY2003. The continuing resolution that allows spending in these areas to continue at the 2002 funding levels will expire soon after the new Congress convenes. Other unfinished business items include the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

Betty DeFea, Federal Advocate

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