

**California State PTA Supports Second Half of the
2002-2004 Education Bond Package**
**\$12.3 Billion School Facilities Bond Measure Slated for
March 2004 Primary Election Ballot**

In March the California State PTA voted to support the second of two statewide school facilities bond measures called for in AB 16 (Hertzberg), which was signed by the Governor in April 2002. The first bond measure, Proposition 47, was approved by almost 60% of California voters in November 2002. Less than six weeks after voters approved the 2002 bond, funds were allocated to more than 2,000 overdue school construction and repair projects. The remainder of the 2002 bond will soon be exhausted as new classrooms are built and old schools are repaired.

The 2004 bond measure will bring another \$12.3 billion to meet the needs for school facilities K-University. In addition to \$2.3 billion for higher education, bond funds will provide \$10 billion for K-12 schools:

- ✓ \$5.16 billion for new school construction, including \$300 million for charter schools
- ✓ \$2.25 billion for modernization
- ✓ \$2.44 billion for critically overcrowded schools
- ✓ \$50 million for joint-use facilities

The coalition of business and education groups that campaigned successfully for the passage of Proposition 47 is already organizing and working to expand the coalition in support of the March 2004 bond measure. The coalition includes a diverse group representing business and education -- the California Business Roundtable, California Building Industry Association, California School Boards Association, California Teachers Association, Association of California School Administrators, Coalition for Adequate School Housing, and the California State PTA, along with supporters from institutions of higher education.

Cecelia Mansfield, Director of Legislation

Governor Signs Budget Reduction Bills More Than Three Billion Dollars Cuts from 2002-2003 Budget

On March 18 Governor Davis signed a package of four bills approved by legislators in the special session on the state budget. These bills made spending reductions in the current fiscal year totaling \$3.3 billion and providing \$23 million in savings in 2003-04.

One of these bills, SBX1 18 (Chesbro) reduces current-year K-14 Proposition 98 education spending by \$2.4 billion. Of this amount, \$1.2 billion in current-year payments are deferred into the budget year. The remainder of the reductions include \$1 billion in spending cuts and \$661 million in reversions of unspent appropriations. In his signing message, Governor Davis indicated he was signing SBX1 18 with reservations. He wrote, "By lowering the current year Proposition 98 appropriations primarily through deferrals rather than reductions, this bill avoids short-term pain, but makes the budget year outlook more difficult."

In the meantime, hope for a boost in the state's projected revenues has evaporated. It is clear that actual revenues will be less than anticipated in January in the Governor's proposed 2003-04 budget. Budget hearings got underway in late February, but efforts to reach some agreement on how to close the growing budget gap is proving elusive. Last week efforts to craft a compromise proposal that would have made about \$6 billion in state budget savings, without any new taxes, collapsed and the debate seems to have become more bitterly partisan. The Governor's May Revision is due to be released on May 14.

May 15 is the deadline for school districts to finalize layoff notices, and the California Department of Education is receiving many inquiries from districts requesting information about funding for Class Size Reduction in the 2003-04 school year. In response the Department has reminded districts that there are no legislative proposals to eliminate the CSR. The Governor's budget proposal for 2003-04 is to maintain the current per pupil rates (\$906 for Option 1 and \$453 for Option 2), but to reduce the state appropriation by 11% - which in turn could cause a deficit, depending on how many school districts choose to drop out of or reduce the program.

The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has several proposals for the Class Size Reduction Program in 2003-04, including placing the program into a block grant. At present, no one knows if the Legislature will act on any of the LAO's proposals or on the Governor's proposal - or if they will introduce a proposal of their own when the Senate and Assembly Budget Committees hear the CSR proposals, probably in May.

Cecelia Mansfield, Director of Legislation

Class Size Reduction Bills Scheduled for Hearing

With time running out to meet the May 2 deadline for fiscal bills to be heard in policy committees, the class size reduction bills are all scheduled to be heard on April 30 in the Assembly and Senate Education Committee. These include two "new" bills by Assemblymember Goldberg and Senator Sher, which have been gutted and amended by the authors with new content. The California State PTA has OPPOSE positions on all of these bills and is working to offer alternatives that provide some additional flexibility for school districts, while protecting the integrity of the K-3 Class Size Program for our youngest and neediest children.

Carol Kocivar, Education Advocate



Arts Update

SB 469 Moves

On April 2 the PTA co-sponsored arts bill **SB 469** (Scott), Instructional Materials, moved out of the Senate Education Committee by a vote of 11-1. The bill is scheduled to be heard next in the Senate Appropriations Committee on April 28. Thank you, PTA members, for all your hard work. We'll keep you posted.

Carol Kocivar, Education Advocate

Healthy Families

Title XXI of the Social Security Act sets forth the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). This program was created by Congress as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. In California, the program is known as Healthy Families. The purpose of the Act is to initiate and expand health insurance coverage to uninsured, low-income children. In California, Health Families covers children in families with incomes up to 250% of the federal poverty level. In fiscal year 2001, the number of children enrolled in Healthy Families was 693,048.

Healthy Families receives federal matching funding through the federal centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, a division of the Department of Health and Human Services. In 1997, Congress appropriated a fixed amount of funds for SCHIP, \$40 billion in federal matching funds over ten years. The law provides a formula for the appropriation of these limited funds and the allotment of these funds among the states and territories. For fiscal 2003 (starting October 1, 2002), the total allotment is \$3,150,000,000. California's current allotment is \$548,807,933 and represents 17% of the total. Each state's allotment for a fiscal year is available to that state for a total of three years-the current fiscal year and the following two years. The law requires that state allotments not expended during the three-year period be redistributed for one more year to states that have fully expended their allotments. Any of these redistributed funds not expended would then revert to the federal treasury.

The California State PTA has an OPPOSE position on **AB 30** (Richman). This bill would expand the Healthy Families Program to provide coverage to employed childless adults who are uninsured for health care coverage and meet household incomes of less than 250% of the federal poverty level.

The California State PTA believes the intent of the law is and ought to be to provide health insurance to low income children. In the past, we have supported efforts to expand Healthy Families to the parents of eligible children because studies have shown that those children would be more likely to be covered and retained in the program, and make use of the coverage for preventive care if their parents were also covered. Also, expansion to parents of eligible children reduces the financial risk and health risks families may suffer if some family members are uninsured. This we believe is a valid use of the federal waiver and furthers the purpose of the act.

There are approximately one million uninsured children in California. It is estimated that when fully implemented, 769,000 children would qualify under existing income eligibility requirements for the Healthy Families program. California should use federal SCHIP matching funds to continue to cover the existing eligible, but yet uninsured children. The state should look for ways to use unexpended funds to expand the Healthy Families program to cover even more children.

California also, we believe, has an obligation to the children in other states. That is, if California is unable to expend its entire share of allotments on its own children, then those funds should be available for children in states that can.

California State PTA is opposed to AB 30 because it would divert funds away from children's health insurance and health programs and direct those funds to populations such as childless adults, who were not intended by the law to be served.

Michael Butler, Health Advocate

Parent Involvement

PTA has a support position on **SB 16** (Soto), which would increase opportunities for parental involvement. Under Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left behind Act (NCBLA), schools are required to have a parent involvement program that includes school-parent compacts in all Title I schools. SB 16 would require schools to extend parent involvement provisions to all parents. This bill was heard in Senate Education Committee on April 2 and placed in the committee's suspense file. Suspense file items will be reconsidered in May.

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Interrogation Bill Advances

The California State PTA has taken a SUPPORT position on **AB 1012** (Steinberg), Pupil Interrogation. AB 1012 requires an elementary school principal to take immediate steps to obtain the oral consent of a parent or guardian of a pupil before making that pupil available to a peace officer. It requires a high school principal to inform a pupil that the pupil has a right to request his or her parent or guardian be present before making that pupil available to a peace officer for questioning. The bill was heard in the Assembly Education Committee on April 23 and passed out of committee on consent. However, the bill may still run into trouble as it moves through the legislative process because of opposition by some law enforcement groups. Governor Wilson vetoed a similar bill, AB 2501 (Mazzoni), in 1998. AB 2501 was also strongly supported by the California State PTA.

PTA has also taken SUPPORT positions on two school safety measures, **AB 1411** (Wolk) and **SB 719** (Kuehl). AB 1411 would broaden the definition of hazing in the state Education Code and would make the act an offense warranting suspension. SB 719 would make certain changes in the 1985 School Safety Act, which established the School/Law Enforcement Partnership.

On another bill, **AB 336** (Parra), Handgun Safety Certificates, PTA has taken an OPPOSE position. Current law requires handgun buyers to obtain a Handgun Safety Certificate prior to purchasing a handgun, which is valid for five years and involves passing a written test on basic handgun laws and safe practices. AB 336 would make the certificate valid-for-life, ignoring the fact the handgun laws change, as do handgun designs and safety features.

Peggy Dial, Community Concerns Advocate

Testing Concerns Addressed

A bill by Assemblymember Loni Hancock addresses several concerns that parents have about testing by making substantive changes to California's assessment program. **AB 356** would discontinue highstakes testing of second grade students, would remove the requirement that students pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) as a condition of receiving a high school diploma, and would eliminate many of the rewards and sanctions provisions of the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA). The bill would ensure that California's as-

essment program remains aligned with testing requirements in the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), which does not require that second grades pupils be tested. PTA believes tests administered to young children should be used for diagnostic and placement purposes only. AB 356 would not eliminate the requirement for high schools pupils to take the CAHSEE, but would allow local school districts to use results of the test for locally determined purposes. The CAHSEE could still be used to meet benchmark requirements for high school graduation as required by the NCLBA. The elimination of rewards and sanctions related to California's assessment program would decrease the amount of time students spend taking tests, allowing more time for teaching and learning, as well as saving money for the both state and local school districts. PTA has a SUPPORT position on AB 356, which was voted out of the Assembly Education Committee on March 19 and awaits a hearing in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Ann Desmond, Education Advocate

DC Corner

IDEA Reauthorization Proceeds Slowly

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce has approved H.R. 1350, the "Improving Education Results for Children with Disabilities Act of 2003." This is the House version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization legislation. The full House of Representatives is expected to begin considering H.R. 1350 as early as the first full week of May.

A number of changes were made in the bill since it was first introduced. National PTA had proposed several changes to protect and build upon existing parental rights provisions in IDEA, and had opposed some provisions. One provision that PTA opposed would have prohibited board members and staff of federally funded nonprofit parent information and training centers from engaging in federal legislative activity. This provision was dropped before final committee action. Two amendments that PTA supported, to fully fund IDEA and make all new funding mandatory, were rejected. Other amendments were also offered and withdrawn, including one that would permit states to use federal IDEA funds to create and expand state voucher programs for children with disabilities.

Betty DeFea, Federal Advocate