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Crowded Ballot Expected for November 2 General Election Deficit Bonds Allowed by Proposition 57 to be Sold

There could be as many as fourteen propositions on the November 2 General Election ballot. Four propositions have already qualified, and the backers of ten additional initiatives have submitted the required signatures and are awaiting official certification. An unusually large number of the proposals have substantial backing from reputable groups like the State Chamber of Commerce, statewide organizations of California cities and counties, individual state legislators and activist organizations that are paying millions of dollars to collect the requisite signatures. Signatures gatherers are being paid up to \$3.50 per name, more than triple the amount just a few years ago.

On April 4 the *Los Angeles Times* published an editorial, *A Little Too Much Initiative*, which asserts that “direct democracy is running amok in California.” The editorial raised many questions about the initiative process, including whether “ballot-box” legislating—often swayed by false or misleading advertising—is a good way to meet the needs of such a large population with such diverse needs. The *Times* believes that measures earmarking billions of dollars in tax funds diminish the ability of the governor and the Legislature to make decisions that result in the distribution of state funds in a balanced way to meet as many needs as possible.

The California State PTA Legislation Committee is studying four of these proposed measures. The committee will make its recommendations regarding possible PTA positions to the Board of Managers in the next few weeks. The four proposals include:

Mental Health Services Expansion and Funding Tax on Incomes over \$1 Million. Initiative Statute.

SCA 1 (Resolution Chapter 1, Statutes of 2004). Burton. Access to government information.

Children's Hospital Projects. Grant Program. Bond Act. Initiative Statute.

Tribal Gaming Compact Renegotiation. Non-Tribal Commercial Gambling Expansion. Revenues, Tax Exemptions. Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute.

Another measure, proposed by the California Teachers Association and filmmaker Rob Reiner, was withdrawn by the sponsors on the eve of the deadline for submitting signatures.

State officials on April 20 authorized the sale of \$12.3 billion in deficit bonds allowed by Proposition 57, which was approved by voters in the March Primary Election. An estimated \$7 billion in bonds will be sold May 4 and an additional \$5.3 billion in bonds will go on sale between May 24 and June 15. Proceeds from the sale of these bonds will be used to refinance money borrowed last fall to cover some of the state's deficit spending in recent years. Even with the proceeds from the sale of these bonds, much work remains before the Governor and the Legislature adopt the state's budget for the coming year. A large structural gap between ongoing revenues and expenses must still be closed.

Cecelia Mansfield, Director of Legislation

Important Calendar Date

The Governor's "May Revision" of the State Budget will be released on Friday, May 14. This forecast, depending on what it says, can have a major impact on the final version of the budget.

Managing Asthma

An estimated 11.9 percent of Californians (3.9 million adults and children) have been diagnosed with asthma. Asthma disproportionately affects children and young adults and is a leading cause of school absenteeism.

AB 2367 (Chan), sponsored by the American Lung Association, would provide a comprehensive approach to addressing childhood asthma in California schools, by providing guidelines for schools to follow, creating a framework for educating school personnel about asthma, and helping children with asthma better self-manage their disease. AB 2367 requires that schools adopt guidelines contained in the *Guidelines for the Management of Asthma in California Schools*. These guidelines have been developed by a statewide taskforce, including asthma organizations, health care providers, the American Lung Association and California Department of Education asthma medical experts. AB 2367 would require schools to

1. maintain on file an asthma action plan for each pupil identified with asthma, developed by the health care provider of the pupil in partnership with the pupil and the parent or guardian of the pupil, to assist the pupil in the acute management of asthma episodes and in maintaining long-term control of asthma.
2. provide annual training to all school staff focused on providing a basic understanding of asthma, including information regarding the most common asthma triggers found in the school environment and the importance of reducing these triggers; awareness of signs and symptoms, and knowledge of the appropriate action or response to initiate assistance when required.

The California State PTA has adopted a SUPPORT position on AB 2367. The bill has been heard in the Assembly Education Committee where it passed on an eleven-to-one vote. At the time of this writing, the bill was being heard in the Assembly Health Committee.

Michael Butler, Health Advocate

Master Plan for Infant and Toddler Care

The need for quality child care continues to grow in the state of California. In today's changing economy many parents are required to work outside the home leaving their very young children to be cared for by someone other than a parent for a portion of the day. The early years, ages birth to 3, is a critical time in a child's development. It is very important for these young children to receive high-quality care that provides a safe and nurturing environment in which the child can develop socially and emotionally.

SB 1343 (Escutia) is addressing this issue through the development of a master plan. This bill would require the California Department of Education (CDE) to establish a task force comprised of all the stakeholders to develop a master plan to include the following (partial list):

- A) Identify broad state goals for making high quality, affordable child care and development services available for children birth to age three.
- B) Identify strategies to ensure access for infants and toddlers to high quality care and development programs.
- C) Reflect the most current research and base recommendations on best practices.
- D) Develop strategies to ensure that all families of infants and toddlers have access to high-quality child care.
- E) Identify infant and toddler care and development program needs and supply, determine gaps between the two, and develop strategies to close those gaps.
- F) Collect and review data on the availability of quality early care and development.
- G) Recommend methods to coordinate with and provide access to comprehensive services.

The California State PTA is in SUPPORT of SB 1343. We recognize the need for a variety of programs and services to address the diverse child care needs of families throughout the state. SB 1343 will work to coordinate with existing programs and recommend additional opportunities for quality child care throughout the state.

Vicky Reinke, Parent Involvement Advocate

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PTA Works on Community Concerns Issues of Concern to Our Children

The California State PTA has been working with the respective offices of several legislators on passage of bills they have authored: **AB 1792** and **AB 1793** (Yee), on the topic of video games; **AB 1012** (Steinberg) regarding student interrogation; and **SB 1386** (Vasconcellos) on student drug testing.

The Yee bills, AB 1792 and AB 1793, which seek to curtail access by minors to adult-rated video games, have run into stiff opposition from manufacturers of the games, the motion picture industry, the ACLU, and video game retailers. PTA's position of SUPPORT for these bills is based on our view that the content of ultra-violent games is inappropriate for children, and that parents need the assistance these bills would provide to accurately understand the content of the games before they buy them for their children. PTA Vice President for Community Concerns Pat Klotz and Legislative Advocate Kathy Moffat participated in a Los Angeles press conference at the request of Assemblyman's Yee's office to bring attention to these bills. Legislative Advocate Vicky Reinke and other PTA officials participated in simultaneous press events statewide. The bills were heard in late April by the Assembly Arts, Entertainment, Sports and Internet Media Committee. PTA members who live in Assembly districts represented by Rebecca Cohn or Fran Pavley are requested to call them and seek their support for these bills.

Emerging as an important Community Concerns issue is **SB 1386** (Vasconcellos) on student drug testing in schools. This bill would allow for drug testing of students under certain circumstances, including suspicion of drug use and written parental permission. The California State PTA voted to take a SUPPORT-IF-AMENDED position on this bill, and Senator Vasconcellos is willing to accept our amendment to assure that if a parent declined to supply the written permission, there would be no negative consequences or coercive repercussions to the student. The Senate Education Committee will hear SB 1386 in late April.

A long-time priority for the California State PTA is the concept that schools have to notify a parent and give them the opportunity to be present before police are allowed to formally question a student while at school. Parental permission for this questioning is required if the child is at home, but

not if the child is at school. PTA believes this parental right should extend to school situations as well.

Over the last fifteen years, three bills have attempted to put this protection in place, and PTA has been on board with a SUPPORT position each time. Currently, **AB 1012** (Steinberg) is the bill that addresses this situation. AB 1012 has passed both houses of the Legislature with bipartisan support and faces the final hurdle, Governor Schwarzenegger. No matter if the child is victim, witness, or suspected of a crime, and no matter if the child is seventeen years old, or six years old, there is no barrier to law enforcement questioning the child without the parent knowing about it, and without a parent's presence. It seems incredible—and objectionable—to most parents that this kind of experience, which can and frequently does intimidate and upset a child, is legal. (It is important to note that the bill makes exceptions for cases involving suspected child abuse or emergencies on campus. Please refer to the bill text.)

If anyone reading this has any personal experience in which your child has been questioned at school by police without your knowledge, please contact Legislative Advocate for Community Concerns Kathy Moffat immediately at PTAAdvocacy@aol.com. Your stories can be very helpful in our efforts to convince the Governor to sign this bill. Our strength is in working together. Please help PTA to help finally pass this important parental rights legislation.

Kathy Moffat, Community Concerns Advocate

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Legislators Look at Gender Equity

The California State PTA is following bills addressing the issue of gender equity in athletics in this legislative session. These bills are prompted by recent studies on gender equity in California schools revealing under-representation of women in athletics and lack of awareness regarding Title IX requirements.

The PTA has a SUPPORT position on **AB 2323** (Jackson/Oropeza). This bill would require the State Department of Education to develop a Gender Equity Compliance Survey for high schools and require high schools to annually submit this survey with its coordinated compliance review data. It was referred to the Appropriations suspense file on April 21.

According to the Assembly analysis of the bill, an independent report, *Title IX Athletics Compliance at California's Public High Schools, Community Colleges, and Universities*, "revealed that of the 125 high schools that returned surveys, only 26% were in compliance with Title IX based on proportionality, defined as having participation rates that were within five percentage points of the enrollment rates for each gender." One of the recommendations of the report is identical to the contents of this bill:

requiring high schools to report athletics data annually and to ensure a monitoring process for Title IX.

PTA has a SEEK AMENDMENTS position on **AB 2240** (Oropeza). This bill would enact the Equity in Athletics Bill of Rights and would enumerate the rights available to a pupils relating to gender equity in athletics. This bill also contains provisions relating to providing information to the public and students about this Bill of Rights. The PTA sought amendments regarding the distribution and posting of the Bill of Rights. It was referred to the Committee on Appropriations on April 21

The legislative analysis of this bill states that, according to the author, the report on *Title IX Athletic Compliance* "proves that there is a severe lack of Title IX awareness at the K-12 level. This bill seeks to increase awareness of Title IX requirements among athletes and their parents."

The PTA has an APPROVE position **AB 2404** (Steinberg), which would prohibit local government agencies from discriminating against any person on the basis of gender in the operation, conduct, or administration of community youth athletic programs and activities, or in the allocation of parks and recreation facilities and resources that support or enable

these programs and activities. This bill was referred to the Appropriations suspense file on April 21

Carol Kocivar, Education Advocate

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PTA Supports Instruction in Personal Financial Planning

The PTA has taken SUPPORT position on **AB 2435** (Wiggins) to ensure that every California high school student has an opportunity to learn financial skills prior to graduation from high school. AB 2435 was voted out of the Assembly Education Committee on April 21 and now goes to the Committee on Appropriations. This bill would require the adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to include instruction on personal financial planning. Instruction would include goal setting, budgeting, savings and credit. A school district may meet this requirement with an existing course.

According to the author, "Teenagers today spend far more than they save. In fact, in 2003 they spent \$175 billion dollars. More and more are acquiring ATM and credit cards before they are even old enough to vote or buy beer. By the time they are freshman in college, teenagers have an average of three credit cards and a staggering \$3,000 in debt not including student loans. In a 2002 national survey of financial know-how, high school seniors scored an average 50.2 percent – a failing grade. That said, only three out of ten teenagers have received any schooling on managing money and establishing good credit.

In 1999, the California State PTA adopted a resolution "Financial Literacy for Youth" that calls for the development of integrated curricula in personal finance education, as well as the development of statewide academic standards in personal financial literacy as a requirement for high school graduation.

This bill would take effect only if the Superintendent of Public Instruction identifies a funding source. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall identify the funding source with existing resources or private funding sources, or both. The superintendent shall notify school districts when sufficient funds have been identified and are allocated to cover all costs for this instruction.

Carol Kocivar, Education Advocate

