

SACRAMENTO UPDATE

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Pay it Back! Says Legislative Analyst Elizabeth Hill Independent LAO Sees More Money in State's Future

On February 22, 2006, Legislative Analyst Elizabeth Hill released her report on the Governor's proposed 2006-07 fiscal year budget. Because of strong economic trends in 2005 which are predicted to continue into 2006 and 2007, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) predicts increases in state revenues beyond the amounts estimated in the Governor's budget. Predictions are for \$1.3 billion more in 2005-06 and \$1 billion more in 2006-07. Good news, right? Right. The LAO sees this windfall as an opportunity for California to "put its fiscal house in order." Alternatives to the Governor's proposal suggested in the LAO's report would:

Fully fund *The Promise* - Restore the money owed as a result of the suspension of Proposition 98 in 2003-04

Fully fund the cost of living adjustment (COLA)

Fully fund state mandated programs

Provide "Fiscal Solvency Block Grants" to districts.

The LAO's analysis of the increased revenues sees this money as resulting from unstable revenue sources based on increased personal income which could easily fall again with uncertainties such as high energy prices and a stalemate in the real estate market. For that reason, Ms. Hill recommends using this unforeseen revenue to pay back debt and reduce the structural deficit in California. In addition, the report recommends that Proposition 49, the After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002, be repealed or at least delayed in implementation.

For more information on the Legislative Analyst's 2006-07 Budget: Perspectives and Issues, go to www.lao.ca.gov.

*Nancy Adalian
Director of Legislation*

Statewide Primary Election

June 6, 2006

Legislators Focusing on Sexual Predators

Issues relating to the sentencing, treatment, parole and parole restrictions for sexual offenders are currently receiving a great deal of attention in Sacramento. Approximately 50 bills relating to this subject are active in either the Assembly or Senate. In addition, sponsors of a ballot initiative entitled *Jessica's Law: Sexual Predator Punishment and Control Act of 2006* claim that they have collected and submitted sufficient signatures to have it qualify for the November 2006 election. Some of the actions proposed by the various bills and the ballot initiative include the use of electronic monitoring of sex offenders upon release from prison; placing further limits upon residency within a certain range of a school; expanding the Sexually Violent Predator program; mandating treatment programs; increasing parole terms; increasing penalties for possession of child pornography; expanding the information available through the Megan's Law website; and increasing sentences for sexual offenders.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that approximately 265,000 convicted sex offenders are under the authority of corrections agencies in the United States. It is estimated that, due to underreporting of these crimes, this figure represents less than 10% of all sex offenders living in communities nationwide. Of the total number of convicted sex offenders, approximately 60% are under some form of conditional supervision in the community following sentencing or a term of incarceration.

One of the critical factors relating to the managing sex offenders is the rate of recidivism, defined as the commission of a subsequent offense. Although various studies have conflicting results, a review of a large number of studies suggests that the recidivism rate for child molesters with female victims ranged between 10 and 29%, while that for child molesters with male victims ranged between 13 and 40%.

It is clear that there is a need for action to protect society, particularly children, from sexual predators. The California State PTA's position statement on child abuse states, "...all children are entitled to live and grow in an atmosphere of love and respect; and no child should be subjected to physical, psychological or sexual abuse." However, it is not clear what the best approach is for protecting children from sexual predators. Many of the active bills single out one particular component of the problem and attempt to provide a solution to that one aspect with-

out addressing the overall problem. The Jessica's Law ballot initiative claims to offer a more comprehensive solution.

At this point in time, California State PTA has not taken a position on any of these bills. We will continue to watch these bills and the pending ballot initiative as they progress in the coming months.

*Debbie Look
Community Concerns Advocate*

California After-School Programs Master Plan

In 2002 the voters of California approved **Proposition 49, the After School Education and Safety Program Act**, known as ASES. Proposition 49 called for a big funding increase for after-school programs if certain criteria were met, based on a complicated calculation that was part of the initiative. The administration and others in Sacramento believe that the criteria has been met, triggering the implementation of Proposition 49 in 2006-07. The Governor's proposed budget would add \$426 million to the \$122 million already spent annually on after-school programs, bringing the annual total to \$550 million. The implementation of Proposition 49 at this time is a matter of considerable discussion in Sacramento. Some are calling for a delay until the Proposition 98 suspension is repaid, and others are calling for its repeal. In addition to concerns about the appropriateness of going forward with the implementation of Proposition 49 at this time, other questions must also be answered. What kind of programs should be funded? Academic or enrichment? What is a quality program?

To that end, a task force has been formed to develop a Master Plan for the implementation of Proposition 49 and to ensure high quality programs that will allow success for all students that participate. The taskforce is made up of key stakeholders including the California Department of Education, state policy makers, after-school providers, school administrators and parents (represented by PTA).

There are 5 key elements of the Master Plan: 1) Mission and Vision Statement (the purpose and goals); 2) Operating Plan (program design and implementation); 3) Administration and Management (oversight and accountability); 4) Workforce Development (resources and skills development, and

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5) Financial Plan (use of funds). These key elements will drive the final outcomes.

A draft of the master plan will be available in March/April to allow the public the opportunity to give input and feedback through several focus groups that will be scheduled throughout the State of California. Dates and locations will be announced through the California State PTA legislation information alerts. The California State PTA has always been a strong advocate for quality after-school programs. It is our hope to have PTA leaders and parents attend these focus groups and have a voice in the final recommendations.

Please feel free to contact me for more information.

Vicky Reinke
Parent Involvement Advocate

Health Commission to Focus On Healthy Lifestyles

Many signs on the landscape point to widespread concern in California and across the country over the status of health and wellness among our children and youth. Epidemic childhood obesity and diabetes have brought stark awareness of the dangers to children resulting from poor nutrition and lack of physical activity. Last year saw the passage of landmark state legislation to adopt nutrition and physical activity curricula for use in California's schools, and to prohibit the sale of junk food and soda items at school. In addition, new federal law requires all school districts to adopt policies by June of this year regarding wellness. PTA members in school districts all over the state are participating on committees to develop these important local policies.

The California State PTA's Health Commission has identified healthy lifestyles as its main legislative focus this year. We will be looking at and advocating for bills that further contribute to a child's improved nutrition, and to conditions that provide opportunities for children to engage in physical exercise and play every day.

Among bills that the California State PTA is watching is **AB 569 (Garcia)** that requires food vendors that have contracts with school districts to furnish nutrition information regarding all food items it provides for sale.

Also of interest are **SB 362 (Torlakson)**, a bill that establishes a grant fund for school districts for the training and employment of physical education teachers, and **SB 1118 (Figueroa)** that deals with health insurance for all children. **SB 1223 (Scott)** is another bill that has come to the attention of State PTA. This bill proposes to require insurance providers to cover up to \$1000 of the cost of hearing aids for children.

State PTA will be keeping close tabs on these and other bills as they develop and progress through the legislature, and possibly take positions on them once their provisions are more clearly defined.

Kathy Moffat
Health Advocate

National Anthem Project

The California State PTA has taken a **support** position on **ACR 117 (Niello)**. This resolution urges communities, schools, and individual citizens to support the National Anthem Project, a campaign to restore America's voice through music education. According to the project, "a recent Harris poll found that two out of three American adults don't know all of the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner" – and many don't even know which song is our National Anthem or why it was written. But where did the people who *do* know the words say they learned *The Star-Spangled Banner* and other patriotic music? At school!"

The National Anthem Project grew out of budget cuts to school music programs that have led to dwindling opportunities for students to learn an important part of their cultural heritage – patriotic music. First Lady Laura Bush is Honorary Chair of this project. The members of The National Association for Music Education (MENC) – representing music teachers – are working on this so that all Americans know the National Anthem and can take pride in singing it together ... and for all children to have access to music in school.

You can find more information about this project at <http://www.thenationalanthemproject.org/>

2006-07 State Budget Proposes Block Grant Program for the Arts

The Governor's budget proposes \$100 million to create a new Art and Music Block Grant to support standards-aligned art and music instruction in kindergarten and grades one through eight. This proposal is similar to AB 869, legislation the PTA sponsored in 2001 called the "Arts Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Assistance Program". (This PTA sponsored bill passed through the education policy committee but was held in the suspense file in the appropriations committee.) According to the budget summary provided by the Governor's office:

In recent years, many California school districts have reduced course offerings in art and music. Educators indicate that this trend has been driven by local budget decisions as well as an increased focus on student achievement in core curricular areas. This trend ignores research that indicates that exposing students to art and music, especially at a young age, has beneficial effects on cognitive development and educational outcomes.

To reverse this trend and expand diverse educational opportunities for students, the Governor's Budget proposes \$100 million to create a new Art and Music Block Grant to support standards-aligned art and music instruction in kindergarten and grades one through eight. These grants will be distributed to school districts and county offices of education and will be available for uses that include hiring additional staff; purchasing materials, books, supplies, and equipment; and staff development. Funding will be allocated at a rate of \$20 per pupil, with a minimum of \$3,000 for school sites with ten or fewer students, and a minimum of \$5,000 per site with more than ten students. This will ensure that grants are functional at smaller schools.

This proposal will be built upon in subsequent budgets to extend the grant program to high schools.

March is Arts Education Month

The PTA again encourages efforts to publicize the importance of arts education through support of SCR 64 (Scott) "Arts Education Month". This proclaims March 2006 as Arts Education Month. SCR 64 encourages communities to celebrate the arts with meaningful activities and programs for pupils, teachers, and the public that demonstrate learning and understanding in the visual and performing arts. The PTA is celebrating March as Arts Education Month by encouraging our units, councils, and districts to participate in *Arts Learning in Action*. This program, in coordination with the California Alliance for Arts Education, asks PTA units, councils and districts to *bring elected officials into our schools* to witness the power of learning in the arts during the month of March.

If we want arts education to *survive* and *thrive* in our schools, we need to *demonstrate* the value of arts education for our children by inviting decision-makers and elected officials into our classrooms to experience learning in the arts first-hand.

Carol Kocivar
Education Advocate

School Facilities Measures Considered for 2006 Ballot

Two identical bills have been introduced on behalf of the governor, **AB 1836 (Daucher)** and **SB 1164 (Runner)**, Education facilities bond acts. These bills are part of the administration's Strategic Growth Plan for infrastructure needs in California.

The Governor's ten-year education bond proposal would ask voters to approve \$38 billion in school bonds on a series of statewide ballots over the next decade, \$26.3 billion for K-12 and \$11.7 billion for higher education. These bonds would be on five separate statewide ballots in 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014. Generally, the Governor's K-12 proposal maintains the existing process for eligibility, establishing costs, and other processed. Different from recent school bonds, the Governor provides significant funding for career technical education and drastically increases funding for charter schools (each would be allocated \$1 billion in 2006 and \$2.4 billion over the entire period).

The 2006 bond calls for \$7 billion for K-12 and
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\$5.4 billion for higher education and will be on either the June or November 2006 ballot. The deadline for the June ballot is March 10, the deadline for the Secretary of State to print supplemental ballot information for the June primary election. Several informational hearings have been held by both the Assembly and Senate Education Committees, and their recommendations have been forwarded to the Joint Conference Committee on Infrastructure Bonds, which began meeting on February 23. Senator Kevin Murray is chair.

The Education Coalition has approved a position paper that will guide PTA's advocacy efforts around the school facilities bonds.

New Work Plan for Assembly Education Committee

On February 15 Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee, unveiled a bold new plan for how the committee will function this spring. Committee members have been divided into three working groups that will focus on the following policy areas:

- Standards, Accountability and Instruction Working Group – Hancock (lead), Huff, Pavley
- School Finance Working Group – Mullin (lead), Richman, Liu
- English Learners Working Group – Coto (lead), Wyland, Arambula, Umberg

Over the several weeks these groups will meet and hopefully develop significant policy proposals designed to address identified needs in each policy area. Each group will work closely with stakeholders to build consensus and bi-partisan support for a direction. Working group bills will be presented to the full Assembly Education Committee in April. The vehicle for Standards, Accountability and Instruction will be **AB 2115 (Goldberg)**, the vehicle for English Learners will be **AB 2117 (Goldberg)**, and the vehicle for School Finance will be **AB 2531 (Goldberg)**.

In the meantime, the Education Committee will hold bills on any of the three subjects assigned to the work groups. This will allow the committee to hear all similar bills together once the work groups have completed their work. The PTA Education Advocates look forward to actively participating in this process.

*Cecelia Mansfield
Education Advocate*

Update on SB 767 (Romero) Mayoral Control of School Board

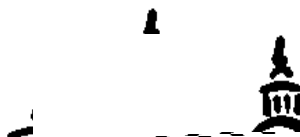
SB 767 by Senator Gloria Romero that would give control of schools in Los Angeles Unified School District to the mayor of the city of Los Angeles has been amended. Senator Romero's bill has now become a vehicle for a study about mayoral control of school districts. The State PTA has been involved along with other educational stakeholders in working with Senator Romero in drafting the new language. Our current position of **Oppose** will remain in place until the new language has been finalized. At that time State PTA will reconsider our position.

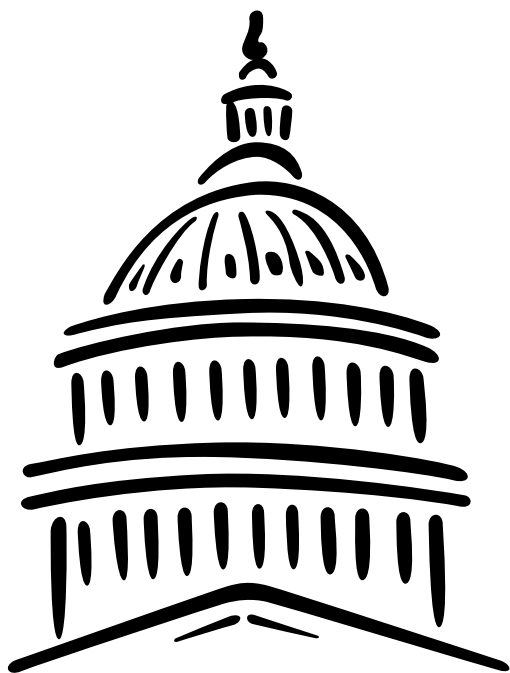
Lottery Legislation Introduced

In January Assemblymember Mullin introduced **AB 1782**, Lottery Act: multistate lottery, distribution of revenues. Recently the Legislation Action Committee took a **Watch** position on AB 1782. This bill would authorize the California State Lottery Commission to enter into a multistate lottery agreement. The revenue from any multistate lottery would be distributed to school districts operating kindergarten and grades 1 to 12 inclusive, based on a specified weighted per pupil formula. Since this proposal would amend California State Lottery Act of 1984, it must be submitted to the voters for approval.

The State PTA actively opposed Proposition 37 in 1984. Through the years legislation has been introduced to change the lottery and State PTA has opposed such bills. Guidelines were developed in March of 1992 that established specific criteria for supporting or opposing lottery Legislation. Since AB 1782 includes language about funding based on a weighted pupil basis -- a policy issue that presently State PTA has not addressed -- and other issues related to placing a cap on the revenues received from the current lottery, State PTA will closely monitor this piece of legislation.

*Pat Dingsdale
Education Advocate*





DC Corner

President Bush has submitted his proposed fiscal year 2007 budget to Congress. It is a \$2.77 trillion spending bill that would, over the next five years reduce \$183 billion in “discretionary” spending for programs that are funded by annual federal appropriations excluding programs of the Department of Defense, homeland security, or international affairs. The majority of the cuts would occur in budget years after 2007. By 2011, the proposed cuts would be 13 percent below the 2006 funding level adjusted for inflation. It should be noted that these cuts are in addition to the across-the-board cuts made in the fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

While the budget approval process is just beginning in Washington, the California Budget Project has outlined what the budget as proposed would mean for California:

Vocational and adult basic education cut by \$1 billion over the five-year proposal period. Included is a plan to eliminate the vocational education state grants.

Elementary and secondary education would be cut by over a billion dollars in the five-year period. These cuts would affect education programs for disadvantaged students, school improvement and special education. Special education would be reduced by \$574.5 million be-

tween 2007 and 2011 and by \$178.9 million after that, representing a federal step back from meeting its 30-year promise to fund the program at a 40% level. Reductions in all these programs could mean encroachment of state and school district general funds based on mandated program requirements.

Programs that assist children and families that also face cuts include Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the WIC program, the Public Housing Capital Fund, Community Development Block Grant, Community Services Block Grant and the Social Services Block Grant. To view the entire report see www.cbpa.org.

*Barbara Paxton
Federal Advocate*

*Legislation Team members Barbara Paxton
and Pat Dingsdale will be representing
California at the National PTA's Annual
Legislative Conference*

“Raising Student Achievement”

in Washington DC March 12-14, 2006

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