

SACRAMENTO UPDATE

CALIFORNIA
STATE PTA

INCLUDING

THE D.C.
CORNER



530 10TH STREET #B, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814 • WWW.CAPTA.ORG

Volume 30, Number 5

May 2006

Agreement Near on Infrastructure Bond Package for November 7 General Election Ballot

Earlier this year, Governor Schwarzenegger announced a proposal to place a mega-bond on the next ballot for the purpose of repairing and replacing certain portions of the California infrastructure, including such items as school building and modernization, levee repair and highway construction. Try as they might, the Legislature and the Governor could not come up with a proposal satisfactory to both sides of the aisle in time for the June ballot. Now, it seems, an agreement to place such a bond, scaled down from the original proposal, on the November ballot will become a reality.

According to the Sacramento Bee, the agreement will include, in what is now four separate bond measures, a total of \$35.3 billion dollars: \$19.2 billion for transportation, \$10.4 billion for schools and universities, \$3.1 billion for flood control and \$2.6 billion for affordable housing.

Ironing out this agreement before the release of the May Revision of the 2006-07 state budget on May 12 will allow the legislators to then turn their attention to the adoption of that budget by the June 30 statutory deadline. We shall see . . .

Other Issues Emerging for the November Election

As of this writing 47 initiatives are still circulating in an attempt to qualify for the November election ballot. Information on initiatives seeking to qualify may be found on the Secretary of State's web site: www.ss.ca.gov. Two of those initiatives which may rise to attract our attention are a state-wide parcel tax for education and an increase in the tobacco tax.

*Nancy Adalian
Director of Legislation*

**On June 6 please vote YES
on Proposition 81
California Reading and Literacy
Improvement and Public Library
Construction and Renovation Bond Act
of 2006**

PTA Testifies in Support of Arts Education

In April the California State PTA testified before both the Senate and Assembly Budget sub committees in support of the proposed \$100 million block grant for arts and music. PTA legislative advocates told the committees that bringing the arts back into our schools and into the lives of our children is a high priority for the PTA. The California State PTA supports full restoration of the funds owed to our schools AND funding for PTA's priority programs in visual and performing arts.

The issue for the subcommittees to consider was a new block grant proposed by the Governor to support arts and music in grades K-8. The Governor proposes \$100 million in ongoing Proposition 98 funding for a new block grant to support standards-aligned art and music instruction. Funding would go to school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education serving grades K-8. Funding would be distributed at a rate of \$20 per pupil, with a minimum of \$3,000 per school site for sites with ten or fewer students, and a minimum of \$5,000 per school site for sites with more than ten students. Under the Governor's proposal, participating schools can spend the funding on any of the following:

- hiring additional staff,
- purchasing new materials, books, supplies or equipment,
- implementing or increasing staff development, as necessary to support standards-aligned arts and music instruction.

Leno Bill Calls for Improved Access to Higher Education for Foster Youth

The California State PTA has taken a **Support** position on AB 2489 (Leno), a bill that creates the *Foster Youth Higher Education Preparation and Support Act of 2006*. AB 2489 includes matching funds for federal grants, enhanced education services in K-12 districts, student aid initiatives to close fee grant gaps in public higher education, a new pro-

gram for college-based foster youth services, and student housing priority at public colleges and universities.

PTA has a long history of supporting legislation that provides services and facilities for the care and protection of abused, dependent, neglected or abandoned children and youth. This bill provides much needed higher education preparation, funding and retention supports for foster youth to help them access and succeed in college.

According to the author, while California protects foster youth from abuse and neglect, it needs to do more to support a successful transition into adulthood.

- Only half of all foster youth complete high school and only 15% take the necessary courses to gain college admission.
- Fewer than 10% who graduate from high school go on to college, and those that do encounter significant obstacles (including insufficient financial aid, insufficient coordination of campus support services, and a lack of a stable place of residence).
- Fewer than 2% of foster youth who go on to college ever graduate.
- Foster youth are more likely than the general population to face homelessness, incarceration and lower lifetime earning potential.

AB 2489 was heard in the Assembly Higher Education on April 18, passing on a vote of 6-0. On April 26 it was heard in the Assembly Education Committee where it passed 8-1. AB 2489 will be heard next in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Carol Kocivar
Education Advocate

Proposal to Simplify School Accountability Report Card

Senator Elaine Alquist has introduced SB 1510 on behalf of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell. This legislation proposes to streamline the School Accountability Report Card by deleting certain requirements and adding a date by which the report must be published each year. The California State PTA has taken a **SUPPORT** position on SB 1510.

The School Accountability Report Card (SARC) was an important mandate of Proposition 98

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

approved by California voters in 1989. It is a valuable tool for promoting a statewide standard of instructional accountability and for informing parents and the local school community about the conditions of teaching and learning at the local school site.

Since 1989 many elements have been added to the SARC, including elements supported by PTA. The cumulative effect of these modifications is that the SARC has grown in length and has become overly complex. It has also become much more expensive for school districts to publish the reports. A UCLA study recently found the SARC harder to comprehend than several IRS forms and Microsoft Windows XP.

SB 1510 will be heard in the Senate Education Committee on May 3. A bill sponsored by the Governor's office, AB 1837 (Daucher), would have added financial information. That bill failed passage in the Assembly Education Committee on April 26.

Superintendent O'Connell is also sponsoring a package of legislation to expand options for students who have not yet passed the **California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)**. These bills, supported by PTA, would provide additional summer and Saturday administrations of the exam, extra funding for intensive remediation programs, independent study programs, and adult school programs for students still struggling to pass the CAHSEE.

Figures released at the end of March showed that around 48,000 high school seniors – almost one in 10 – still had not passed at least one part of the exam as of last fall. Although the exit exam was approved in 1999, the class of 2006 is the first class required to pass the exam to get a California high school diploma.

PTA is also closely monitoring the development of several **teacher credentialing** bills that will address the projected shortage of 100,000 teachers due to the retirement of an aging teacher force over the next decade. Two of these bills that reflect many of the recommendations of the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning are **SB 1209 (Scott)**, an omnibus bill, and **SB 1124 (Torlakson)**.

Another bill important to the California State PTA is **AB 1918 (Wolk)**, which would call on school districts to offer supplemental instruction program to students in grades K-1 who are recommended for retention or have been retained. AB 1918 is similar to AB 572 (Wolk) which was sponsored by PTA last year. It was approved (8-2) by the Assembly Education Committee on April 12 and will be heard next in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

On April 6 the Assembly Education Committee work groups reported their recommendations to the committee. AB 2115 (Hancock), AB 2117 (Coto) and AB 2531 (Mullin) were amended to reflect the recommendations of each of the groups.

*Cecelia Mansfield
Education Advocate*

PTA Opposes Alternative Approach to Class Size Reduction

California State PTA has taken an OPPOSE position on **AB 2431 (Goldberg)**, which would establish an alternative approach to the Class Size Reduction Program. AB 2431 proposes to expand the existing K-3 Class Size Reduction (CSR) Program to include grades 4 and 5 for a school district having a school that is ranked in any of deciles 1 to 3 on the Academic Performance Index (API). In order to fund the expansion, school districts with schools ranked in any of deciles 4 to 10 would be allowed to maintain a school site average of 22 pupils to 1 teacher with no class exceeding 24 per class.

State PTA believes that there is a need to provide some flexibility in the current CSR program that would allow additional options for school districts in implementing the K-3 CSR Program. However, AB 2431, which would increase class size for some students in order to reduce class size for other students is not a bill PTA can support.

*Pat Dingsdale
Education Advocate*

Safety is the Key

Many of the bills being supported within the Community Concerns area this session relate to safety issues. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death and disability in children over the age of one year. **AB 2108 (Evans)** addresses child passenger safety and would require that children up to 8 years old, or 4 feet 9 inches in height, ride in booster seats and that children under 13 years ride in the rear seat. Using a booster seat with a seat belt rather than a seat belt alone reduces a child's risk of injury in a crash by 59%. A child's risk of injury is reduced by 33% when the child is seated in the rear seat rather than the front seat.

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

Drowning is another leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 5 years old. **AB 2977 (Mullin)**, the Swimming Pool and Spa Safety Act of 2006, would require that homeowners install two of seven specified safety features when they are remodeling their existing pool or spa. These safety features are generally included in newly built pools and spas, but many older pools exist without these features to protect children from drowning. The bill also requires that homeowners and apartment complex owners install an anti-entrapment cover on pool and spa drains to avoid the entrapment of hair and body parts to prevent injury and fatality among children and adults.

The California State PTA is currently supporting two traffic safety bills. A 2001 CAPTA resolution specifically called for school traffic and pedestrian safety improvements including the doubling of traffic fines in school zones. PTA recognizes the importance of implementing traffic and pedestrian safety solutions to reduce the high rate of pedestrian injuries and deaths, particularly among children between the ages of 5 and 12. **AB 1976 (Nava)** extends the sunset date for current law, which allows for school districts and cities in, and the counties of, Santa Barbara, Ventura and Alameda to establish Safety Enhancement Double Fine Zones for traffic violations in school zones. Funds acquired from the enhanced portion of the fines are used to fund pedestrian-bicyclist safety programs, including crosswalk signs and crossing guards. This pilot program is set to expire on January 1, 2007. The California Highway Patrol is to present a report by July 1, 2006 on the effectiveness of these programs and whether the increased fines improve traffic and pedestrian safety. The current timeline may be inadequate to prevent the bill from expiring, so we are supporting the extension to allow time for legislators to consider the results of the CHP study and to take appropriate action.

AB 2465 (De La Torre) authorizes all counties and cities in California to establish a school pedestrian-bicyclist safety program, funded through the enhanced portion of the fines levied for moving violations in school zones and would repeal the sunset date of the current pilot program operating in Alameda, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

PTA previously supported SB 1368 (Brulte) which created the California Safe Surrender Baby Law in 2000 and SB 116 (Dutton) that made that law permanent in 2005. These laws were intended to save the lives of infants by encouraging parents to bring their baby to a designated safe surrender site

instead of abandoning them in an unsafe location. The law specifies that parents may relinquish a baby 72 hours or younger to an employee at a safe surrender site anonymously and without risk of criminal prosecution. Since the Safe Surrender Law in California went into effect in 2001, over 122 babies have been safely surrendered. PTA is now supporting **AB 1873 (Torrico)** to extend the safe surrender provision for infants up to 30 days old as well as to add manned fire stations as designated safe surrender sites. The bill also allocates \$5 million for a public awareness campaign to make parents aware of the options to safely surrender or voluntarily relinquish an infant they are unable to care for.

*Debbie Look
Community Concerns Advocate*

PTA Supports Kindergarten Bills

AB 2596 (Sharon Runner) and **SB 1764 (George Runner)** are bills dealing with the age of admission into kindergarten. These bills will require that a child turn 5 years old by September 2 to enter kindergarten (currently children can enter kindergarten at age 5 if their birthday is before December 2 of that school year), and age 6 years old by September 2 to enter 1st grade. Both bills specify that any savings to the State, because fewer children would enter kindergarten that first year, would go towards programs for preschool and day care to support 4 year olds.

The bills have recently been amended to provide a phase-in over a three-year period, increasing the age requirement by one month each year. Year one, age of entry would be 5 years old by November 2; Year two, age of entry would be 5 years old by October 2 and so on. It is being recommended that the phase in begin 2007-08.

The California State PTA believes that increasing the age of admission to 5 years old prior to September 2 is best for our children. Since today's kindergartens are becoming more narrowly focused on academics children need to be given more time to develop basic skills before entering kindergarten. Currently the age difference in kindergarten between students can be as young as 4 and as old as 6. We know that children at this young age learn at very different rates. PTA is in support of this requirement.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

PTA is also in Support of **AB 2046 (Coto)**. This is a bill that would require school districts to begin implementing longer school days for kindergarten, moving the time children will be in class from 130 minutes to 230 minutes. PTA supports the longer kindergarten day as long as the added time is used to develop the social and readiness skills needed for these children to become successful academic learners.

Increasing the age requirement and extending the school day will give children a better opportunity to be successful in school.

PTA will continue to follow these bills as they move through the legislative process.

*Vicky Reinke
Parent Involvement Advocate*

Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles Take Center Stage

The enactment of **AB 689 (Nava)** and **SB 12** and **SB 965 (Escutia)** in the last legislative session were landmark actions taken by California policymakers to ensure nutritious food and beverage offerings in schools and to teach children about the importance of good nutrition and exercise in school health curricula. Recently the Clinton Foundation (former President Clinton's charitable foundation) joined with Pepsico, Cadbury Schweppes, and the nation's largest beverage distributors in announcing the agreement of those companies to end sales of sugary beverages in the nation's schools. As California goes, so goes the nation!

This year several bills have been introduced that would follow-up by proposing to make fresh fruits and vegetables available in schools and in low income neighborhoods, to provide training for school personnel and hire more physical education teachers.

Skyrocketing rates of asthma are being diagnosed, and the management of asthma at school presents a serious challenge. Another serious issue is pandemic preparedness. California State PTA supports **AB 264 (Chan)** to require contracts for health care service plans to include coverage for outpatient training and education necessary to use the medications and devices prescribed for the treatment of pediatric asthma for an enrollee who meets certain criteria. This is especially important in California which trails the nation not only in student/teacher ratios, but which is last among the states in librari-

ans, counselors, administrators, AND school nurses. With no school nurse at each school, it falls to a health clerk to deal with children with chronic illnesses and who need critical dosages of powerful medication to properly manage their conditions. We also are watching **AB 1956** by Shirley Horton of San Diego which would establish a pilot program of computer mapping of infectious disease outbreaks.

SB 1223 (Scott) SUPPORT would require health care service plans and health insurers to provide coverage up to \$1,000 for hearing aids for all enrollees and for minors up to age 18 years. Currently hearing aids are not automatically a covered benefit. This coverage will add minimal cost to insurance premiums, about 1 cent for the typical premium. A hearing aid for one child can cost up to \$3,000.

SB 1288 (Cedillo) SUPPORT would require MediCal to cover drug and alcohol treatment programs for young people between the ages of 12-20 years. Currently there are few programs appropriate for the treatment of minors who have abuse problems, and limited access to them because they are not covered. With this coverage, more programs will be developed to appropriately deal with youth addiction, and access to them will be increased.

*Kathy Moffat
Health Advocate*



Budget Update

Governor's May Revision to be Released May 12

At a time when reports indicate an increase in state revenues of more than \$4 billion over what was anticipated when the Governor released his proposed budget for California in January, Sacramento is eagerly anticipating the release of the Governor's May Revision on Friday, May 12. Both houses of the Legislature will then begin the serious work to hammer out their versions of the budget, culminating in an agreement required by statute to be signed by June 30 on the state's priorities.

Advocacy groups representing diverse constituencies are all hoping this year will see the restoration of funds for programs that have been severely impacted in recent years.

DC Corner

PTA Celebrates Halt of Soda Sales to Public Schools

CHICAGO (May 4, 2006) – PTA applauds the tremendous accomplishment of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to improve the nutritional quality of options made available in our schools' vending machines. This is a great step toward ensuring children are healthy and ready to learn every school day.

PTA has long sought to improve child nutrition and wellness, as well as health and fitness programs. PTA supports the "Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act" (S. 2592 and H.R. 5167), a bill designed to make certain high nutritional standards are required of all food and beverages sold on school premises, including vending machines and school stores. The attention garnered by yesterday's announcement should go far to motivate more members of Congress to lend their support to this important legislation.

Over the past year, parents nationwide have been working to create and implement school wellness policies. Now is a prime opportunity for parents to work with local vendors to include standards within these wellness policies that guarantee children have the most nutritious options in their school's vending machines.

PTAs are encouraged that Cadbury Schweppes, Coca Cola, PepsiCo, and the American Beverage Association have joined forces with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and others to help build a brighter and healthier future for children and young people. We look forward to seeing other corporations take similar steps in the future.

Barbara Paxton
Federal Advocate

Sacramento Update is published five times per year in July, October, January, February/March, and April/May by the California State PTA Legislation Team, 530 10th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 442-5667, FAX: (916) 442-0906. E-mail: PTAAdvocacy@aol.com. World Wide Web address: <http://www.capta.org>

All rights reserved. PTA is a registered service mark of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

Director of Legislation.....Nancy Adalian
Sacramento Update Editor.....Cecelia Mansfield
 Education Advocate.....Pat Dingsdale
 Education Advocate.....Carol Kocivar
 Education Advocate.....Cecelia Mansfield
 Community Concerns Advocate.....Debbie Look
 Health Advocate.....Kathy Moffat
 Parent Involvement Advocate.....Vicky Reinke
 Federal Advocate.....Barbara Paxton
 Consultant.....Michael Butler
 Consultant.....Betty DeFea

Articles appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted in PTA unit, council and district newsletters only. Please credit the California State PTA.