

SACRAMENTO UPDATE

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STATE PTA

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LAO Predicts Revenue Shortfall

Gloomy Forecast May Impact 2007-08 Budget Proposal

Governor Schwarzenegger's 2007-08 budget as proposed in January is facing some pressures that were not anticipated when it was first announced. In the analysis of the budget bill released by the Legislative Analyst on February 21, it was estimated that the Governor's budget plan would result in 2007-08 expenditures exceeding revenues by \$2.6 billion. This would leave the state with a \$726 million year-end deficit, compared to the Governor's January 10 estimate of a \$2.1 billion positive reserve. The projected budget deficit is due mainly to lower than expected personal year-end income tax revenues with higher required expenditures also in play. Rumors of mid-year cuts in the budget have begun to surface in Sacramento.

The Education Coalition, of which State PTA is a member, has issued a statement commending the Governor's "commitment to maintaining stable funding for basic education programs." However, the Coalition takes issue with the proposed shift of home-to-school transportation funding out of the Proposition 98 funding base. Doing so would reduce the Proposition 98 base by \$627 million. Other proposals which would impact the Proposition 98 base are also of concern.

The Legislature is just beginning deliberations on the proposed budget for 2007-08. The revised

budget will be released by the administration in May and the final budget that emerges will require much debate and negotiation between the Governor's office and state legislators. The PTA voice will be heard not just on education issues but also in other areas, particularly health and safety, that affect the well-being of California's children.

Nancy Adalian
Director of Legislation

March is Arts Education Month

During the month of March, the California State PTA and the California Alliance for Arts Education are jointly sponsoring a statewide campaign to bring elected officials into our schools to witness the power of learning in the arts. The California State PTA has sent a letter to every member of the Legislature urging them to visit arts classes and arts events at their local schools in March. PTA members are urged to play a critical role in bringing the arts back into our schools and back into the lives of our children. The **ARTS LEARNING IN ACTION TOOLKIT** provides all the information needed for local PTAs to plan events
(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

in their community and to extend a personal invitation to local legislators. The Toolkit is available on the SMARTS: Bring Back the Arts web page on home page of the PTA web site www.capta.org.

In support of PTA's advocacy efforts on behalf of the arts in education, SUPPORT positions were recently taken on **ACR 18 (Ruskin)**, Arts Education Month, and **SB 232 (Ducheny & Florez)**, Instructional strategies, subject matter projects.

Vast Majority of California Schools Fail to Meet State Arts Standards

A landmark study released March 1 from independent research institute SRI International reveals that the vast majority of California's schools fail to meet state standards for teaching arts, and that access to arts instruction varies widely among the state's schools.

The study, "An Unfinished Canvas, Arts Education in California: Taking Stock of Policies and Practices," finds that most K-12 schools fail to meet standards that California established in 2001 for teaching the arts in four areas: visual arts, music, dance and theater. Until now, California has lacked comprehensive and reliable information to indicate whether these standards for arts instruction were being met. Download copies of the study at www.sri.com. Copies are also available on the California State PTA website SMARTS: Bring Back the Arts web page.

PTA Supports Middle and High School Supplemental Counseling Program

The California State PTA is supporting AB 131 (Beall), a bill that allows County Offices of Education to compete for the same supplemental counseling funding as school districts. County offices of Education serve students in a variety of alternative education programs such as juvenile hall, community schools, and independent study. These students are at more risk of dropping out than their counterparts in traditional schools.

Last year, AB 1802 established the Middle and High School Supplemental Counseling Program, which provided \$200 million in grants to help fund school counseling programs. Over 70,000 at-risk students statewide would be

served by expanding the supplemental counseling funding to county offices of education. Sponsors of the bill include the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, School Innovations & Advocacy, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education. In 2000 delegates to the California State PTA Convention passed a resolution supporting increasing the counselor to student ratio in schools.

*Carol Kocivar
Education Advocate*

Budget and Policy Committee Hearings Begin

Members of the Legislation Team are busy sorting through the flood of legislation introduced during the week preceding the February 23 deadline for legislators to introduce their bills. Based on the California State PTA priorities, advocates will screen bills to determine which bills PTA will track on behalf of California children in the coming months. More than 2700 bills, resolutions and constitutional amendments have been introduced. 1700 bills were introduced in the Assembly, and more than 1000 bills will be considered by the Senate.

The first Budget hearings were held this week. The Assembly and Senate Budget Subcommittees on Education began with an overview of issues with testimony by Superintendent of Instruction Jack O'Connell and Acting Secretary of Education Scott Himelstein.

Assemblymember Gene Mullin of South San Francisco, a high school social studies for 32 years, is the new chair of the Assembly Education Committee. Other members of the Assembly Education Committee are:

Martin Garrick, Vice Chair
Julia Brownley
Joe Coto
Mike Eng
Loni Hancock
Bob Huff
Betty Karnette
Alan Nakanishi
Jose Solorio

The Assembly Education Committee will once again organize into workgroups to allow members

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

sufficient time to become knowledgeable on key education issues. There will be three workgroups -- School Finance (Julia Brownley, Chair), Special Education (Betty Karnette, Chair), and Career/Technical Education (Chair, Loni Hancock).

Senator Jack Scott of Pasadena will continue as the chair of the Senate Education Committee. Other members of the Senate Education Committee. Also serving on the Senate Education Committee are:

Mark Wyland, Vice Chair
 Elaine Alquist
 Jeff Denham
 Abel Maldonado
 Alex Padilla
 Gloria Romero
 Joe Simitian
 Tom Torlakson

Cecelia Mansfield
Education Advocate

Education Coalition to Conduct Legislative Sweep

The Education Coalition, which includes the State PTA, will be conducting their annual legislative sweep conveying the coalition position and concerns about the governor's proposed budget for 2007-08 to the leadership of the Senate and Assembly, committee chairs and vice-chairs of Appropriations and Budget, Education Finance and members of both Assembly and Senate Education Committees. Also the coalition will be meeting with representatives of the governor. State PTA and our partners in the Coalition will be scheduling approximately 30 meetings during the next few weeks.

Irvine Foundation Funds California Mayors' Education Roundtable

The James Irvine Foundation has awarded WestEd a three-year grant to establish the California Mayor's Education Roundtable. The California Roundtable is being modeled on the experiences and knowledge gained from a state-wide mayor's education roundtable in Ohio. Directing the project for WestEd will be Fritz Edelstein, a national expert on mayoral leadership and involvement in education, and Michael Kirst, a consultant to WestEd.

Mayors from large urban cities in California will be invited to an initial meeting tentatively scheduled for April 2007. Mayors representing the cities of Long Beach, San Diego, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, Sacramento, Berkeley, Riverside, Pasadena, San Bernardino, Stockton, Modesto, Bakersfield, Modesto, San Jose and Santa Barbara have been invited.

This grant will enable California's large city mayors to come together to discuss and share education concerns common to large cities. The roundtable meetings will focus on education policy issues at the local and state levels, mayoral initiatives in education and implementation strategies, information and best practices sharing.

Pat Dingsdale
Education Advocate

Spotlight on Health Care Insurance and Expanded Access

Responding to a growing need in California that mirrors the nation, and initiated in Governor Schwarzenegger's budget proposal, health care insurance and access to health care is **the** buzz in Sacramento. For many years we have heard concerns from PTA members and families across the state about the lack of affordable health insurance coverage for children and families, preventing them from getting the care they need and deserve. This causes individuals without access to adequate preventive and/or early care of disease to delay care and to resort to expensive emergency room services as a primary care venue. Not only is this a costly and inefficient way to provide health care, it perpetuates serious risks for patients whose health has deteriorated to such dangerous levels that effective treatment and cure become much more difficult.

The California State PTA has long advocated for access to affordable health care for all children and families. The governor's proposal for universal health coverage presents one way to approach this goal. But it is important to note that there are many other plans being proposed in the legislature as well. Senate President Pro Tem Perata, and Senators Kuehl and Steinberg have all introduced health care plans. In the Assembly, Speaker Nunez, as well as Assembly Members Beall, de la Torre, Dymally, Eng, Evans, Laird and Nakanishi have also authored bills on the subject. State PTA will closely monitor the debate as it develops and bring you updates.

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

Children's healthy lifestyles, and the prevention of childhood obesity and related risks of diabetes are still priorities. PTA has taken early positions of SUPPORT on **AB 86 (Lieu)**, **AB 90 (Huffman)** to prohibit trans fats in school foods, and on **SB 20 (Torlakson)** to raise school districts' reimbursement for nutritional improvements in foods served at school. State PTA also has a SUPPORT position on **AB 92 (Garcia)** that requires schools to offer breakfast for students where there is severe need. PTA has an APPROVE position on **SB 107 (Alquist)**, a bill that assists underserved communities to encourage the establishment of retail food markets that offer high quality fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods. Responding to the Convention Resolution of 2005 on sun safety, State PTA has also taken a SUPPORT position on **AB 105 (Lieu)** regulating tanning facilities and their use by minors.

The advent of new human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines to prevent cervical cancer has presented society with a question – should schools mandate this new immunization the way polio, measles and other vaccinations are mandated? **AB 16 (Hernandez)** creates this mandate for California schools, and State PTA is carefully watching it as the discussion proceeds and as more information becomes available on the cost and efficacy of the drugs. Central to the issue is the proper role of parents and schools in making this decision about children and immunization.

SB 24 (Torlakson), SUPPORT, would add a tax to cigarettes of 9.5 cents per cigarette, to discourage young people from becoming smokers. The revenue raised would be dedicated to children's health related purposes and to smoking cessation programs. State PTA of this bill is consistent with our support of Proposition 86 on last November's ballot.

*Kathy Moffat
Health Advocate*

Community Concerns Bills Focus on Safety & Violence Prevention

Early bills in this session being supported by Community Concerns include a number related to traffic safety and violence prevention. **AB 57 (Soto)** proposes to repeal the sunset date for the "Safe Routes to School" construction program, so that the program will continue indefinitely. This program

encourages children to walk and bicycle to school; makes walking and bicycling a safer and more appealing alternative form of transportation; and facilitates projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. California will receive \$68.2 million in federal funding, through this program in 2007. CAPTA will also be looking at other traffic safety bills including **AB 321 (Nava)** which proposes establishing a 15 mph speed limit within 500 feet of a school.

SB 33 (Simitian) would prohibit a driver under 18 from driving a motor vehicle while using a wireless telephone or any other type of mobile service device (including text messaging/email units, etc.). This provision would apply even if the driver were using a hands-free device. The author notes that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of teen fatalities and that teen drivers are four times more distracted than adult drivers by cell phone use.

Assemblymember Torrico is making another attempt this year to extend the provisions of the **Safe Surrender** laws by allowing a parent to relinquish a child up to 30 days old at a designated Safe Surrender site without risk of prosecution. This bill, **AB 81 (Torrico)** is very similar to the bill that PTA supported last year, which was ultimately vetoed by the Governor. In addition, to the time extension, the bill designates manned fire stations as additional safe surrender sites and provides funding for a statewide awareness campaign about the availability of safe surrender options.

PTA is supporting a number of bills designed to bring awareness to domestic violence issues. **ACR 6 (Ma)** proclaimed February 5-9, 2007 as Teenage Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Week. **ACR 11 (Beall)** designates October 2007 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month and **SCR 8 (Battin)** identifies April 2007 as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

A hot topic in Sacramento this year is the **prevention of gang violence**. Numerous legislators have introduced bills offering a range of solutions to this societal problem. These include funding for gang suppression and intervention programs, stiffer penalties for gang-related offenses, registration requirements and electronic monitoring of sentenced gang offenders and creating "gang-free zones" around parks.

Other community concerns topics receiving attention this year include juvenile justice reforms;

(continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4)

needs of foster youth, particularly as they transition out of the foster care system; prevention of underage drinking; and school safety, including the need to ensure schools have adequate safety plans in place and prohibitions on bringing weapons on campus.

*Debbie Look
Community Concerns Advocate*

Will this be the year?

Again this year we will see legislation that addresses the age of admission into kindergarten, a topic that has been brought forward for many years but has never been passed into law.

Assembly Member Sharon Runner and Assembly Member Gene Mullin have introduced bills recommending a change to the start date for children entering kindergarten. The Runner bill **AB 683**, asks for a three year phase-in, raising the age from five years old as of December 2 to five years of age by September 1. The Mullin bill **AB 1236**, asks for an immediate change of age from the current five years of age by December 2 to five years of age by September 1. Both bills recommend using any money saved from this change to make available more opportunities for preschool programs. PTA has supported this idea in the past because PTA recognizes that children need to be ready emotionally and developmentally to succeed in school. Starting school at age 5 and providing more opportunities to attend preschool is in the best interest of the child.

Additional legislation to address access to quality preschools is being introduced by several legislators. Assembly Member Dave Jones has introduced **AB 571**, a bill that will ask for an expansion of preschool opportunities for more children in California especially for children most in need. This bill is still being developed. Specific language is not yet included in the bill. **AB 1236**, introduced by Gene Mullin will also address a kindergarten readiness program and Assembly Member Anna Caballero has introduced **AB 1028** addressing preschool programs for low income students. PTA will follow these bills as they are developed.

This will be a busy year working on many of the same issues. Maybe this will be the year!

*Vicky Reinke
Parent Involvement Advocate*

Annual Legislation Conference Was Best Ever

Important and timely issues were the topics of discussion with California's leading authorities, elected officials, and policy makers at the Legislation Conference held January 28- 30. Attendance was great. The conference was the best ever - just ask anyone! If you missed it, make a note now to be sure you are there next year! We are all advocates.

Every child; one voice.

DC Corner

The 110th Congress is in full swing and is scheduled to consider the reauthorization of three significant programs: Elementary and Secondary Education Act/NCLB, Head Start, and State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). National PTA and the California State PTA are monitoring the reauthorization legislation as it is introduced. Below are summaries of the issues to help prepare you for future advocacy efforts.

ESEA/NCLB Reauthorization

The U.S. Department of Education has published "Building on Results: A Blueprint for Strengthening the *No Child Left Behind Act*." Emphasizing the goal of NCLB to make "steady academic gains until all students can read and do math at or above grade level," the Blueprint focuses on the next steps the department believes should be included in the reauthorization of the act, with emphasis on assisting struggling schools and improving the academic performance of middle and high schools.

One proposal calls for the establishment of "a national expectation of real high school reform that would include "that every high school student graduate on time with a diploma that indicates readiness for success in postsecondary education and the 21st-century workforce." Continuing the focus on high school, the Blueprint promotes improved high school graduation rates, rigorous coursework and increased funding for high schools that serve low-income students. New timelines would require that by 2010-11, states must develop course-level academic standards for two years of English and math that will prepare high school students to succeed in college and the work place. By 2021

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

thirteen states must administer assessments aligned to these standards and publicly report student progress.

Under the policy title “Strengthening Public Schools and Empowering Parents” the Blueprint promotes enhancing school choice with public and private school scholarships.

There are many issues in the Blueprint that merit close scrutiny by PTA as bills are written to implement these proposals. To access the Blueprint go to the NCLB section at www.ed.gov.

Head Start Reauthorization

This will generate a lot of debate in the Congress. The administration has proposed to fund Head Start at \$6.789 billion dollars for FY 2008, \$62 million below FY 2006 funding. In addition, they have recommended diminishing the role of the parent advisory councils. Senators Enzi, Dodd, Alexander and Kennedy have introduced the Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (**S.556**) as the opening Head Start reauthorization legislation. The Act calls for multi-year funding increases to expand Head Start, including the Early Head Start program for infants and toddlers.

S.556 focuses on school readiness, increases teacher training requirements, and strengthens program accountability. It would establish a Head Start Collaboration Office in every state to maximize services and align Head Start with kindergarten classrooms. To access S.556 go to www.thomas.loc.gov

State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)

SCHIP was established by Congress in 1997 to provide funds to support states efforts to expand health coverage to uninsured children and some adults, whose family income makes them ineligible for Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California). California uses its SCHIP dollars to fund the Healthy Families program. Funding for SCHIP expires in 2007. The President’s Proposed Budget for FFY 2008, provides for insufficient funds to sustain the current program. Under this budget proposal California’s share would likely be between \$750 million-\$850 million over the next five years. This is far less than the additional \$2-3 billion needed to support California’s current program. In addition, the Budget calls for reduction in the Medi-Cal program over the next five years. These proposals could result in reduction of services or no services at all for our state’s neediest children. According to a report from the California Budget Project “the cost of covering children under Healthy Families is somewhat lower

than the cost of private insurance.” Many state governors have said that a scale back of SCHIP would undercut their attempts to craft universal health care plans. Governor Schwarzenegger has included Healthy Families in his universal health proposal. Access the California Budget Project SCHIP report go at www.cbp.org.

*Barbara Paxton
Federal Advocate*

*National PTA President Anna Weselak
will join hundreds of grassroots
advocates and national cultural and
civic organizations in Washington D.C.
on March 12 for Arts Advocacy Day.
Events will underscore the importance
of developing strong public policies and
increasing public funding for the arts.*

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