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Can We Make a Difference in This Budget Battle?

“Yes, we can!” Since the initial Legislation Alert and Press Release on January 11, PTA leaders and members have heeded the call to action concerning the Governor’s proposed budget for 2008-09. The proposed funding cuts for education, healthcare and other children’s services will have a devastating effect on the lives of children in California.

Thanks to the actions of many of you, the PTA voice on behalf of children here in California is being heard. PTA leaders, members and parents are attending press conferences, writing letters, sending faxes and e-mails to the Governor and the State Legislature. PTA districts and councils are hosting forums and providing community wide informational meetings to raise the awareness level about the fact that the Governor’s proposed budget will harm the youngest and most vulnerable in our state, our children. At Founders Day events, PTA members took out their cell phones and made calls to the Governor to convey the message that these proposed cuts are unacceptable. As parents drop their children off at school, they have been handed talking points, phone numbers and encouraged to phone their state representatives and the governor.

At the State PTA level members of the Board of Directors, Board of Managers and office staff have worked tirelessly to develop the tools needed to mobilize each member of the PTA so that the voices that speak on behalf of children could be heard loud and clear. The www.capta.org web site is regularly updated with information. *Flunk the Budget!* information includes sample letters, a phone script and a

fact sheet on the proposed cuts. Materials are being translated into Spanish and will be posted on the web site soon. There are also links to other organizations, such as The California Budget Project and EdSource, who offer additional resources about budget issues.

This may be a long drawn-out battle over several months, and we must continue to convey our concerns about the Governor’s proposed budget. In the months ahead State PTA will continue to develop tools, information and advocacy activities to assist PTA leaders and members in their efforts to *Flunk The Budget, Not Our Children!*

Our message is clear: Our children did not create this financial crisis, and they should not have to pay for it. PTA opposes the proposed budget cuts to education and to programs that ensure the health and protection of ALL the state’s children, youth and families.

Pat Dingsdale
Director of Legislation

March is Arts Education Month

Once again PTA is supporting legislation, **ACR 88 (Fuller)**, declaring **March Arts Education Month** and encouraging all elected officials to participate with their educational

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communities in celebrating the arts during the month of March.

PTA is also supporting **SCR 70 (Scott)** that would recognize California Arts Council's more than 30 years of service to the state's residents and visitors. It would proclaim October 3, 2008 as Arts Day.

Career Technical Education

Career Technical Education continues to be a priority of the Governor and the Legislature, as well as the California State PTA. PTA has taken a support position on **AB 876 (Davis) Career Technical Education**, which would require the California State University, and request the University of California, to take specified actions with the respect to the recognition of career technical education coursework in connection with the admission criteria of the respective universities.

Special Education

A number of special education bills have been introduced, which are currently under review. One of those bills, **AB 1768 (Evans)**, would require local education agencies to ensure that certain children who might become ineligible for early intervention services under the California Early Intervention Services Act continue to receive services pending a hearing.

*Susan Solomon
Education Advocate*

Civic Mission of Schools

Assemblymember Gene Mullin, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee, has introduced **AB 2544**, Model Civic Education Staff Development Program. AB 2544 calls for the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a plan and make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor on a model civic education staff development program. Unlike AB 1537, which died in Assembly Appropriations in January, this new bill does not create a grant program.

Delegates to the 2006 California State PTA convention passed a resolution calling for a renewed emphasis on civic education. The California State PTA is partnering with the Constitutional Rights Foundation, the Office of the Secretary of State, and others as part of the **Educating for Democracy Campaign** who is the sponsor of both bills.

Student Data System

On February 13 the Assembly Education Committee held an Informational Hearing in Sacramento on how to move California's efforts to build an education data system. Invited presenters included Dr. Jay Pfeiffer, Deputy Commissioner of the Florida Department of Education, and representatives of the Department of Education, and the Legislative Analyst's Office. The LAO highlighted their new report, *Refining Student Data Access Policy* that raises some important issues about student privacy.

PTA is tracking a number of bills that have been introduced on the collection and use of student data and student data systems. We are also tracking at least a dozen bills on accountability and assessment.

*Cecelia Mansfield
Education Advocate*

The Beat Goes On

February 22 was the deadline for legislators to introduce bills, and the Legislation Team is currently reviewing hundreds of bills to identify legislation for possible consideration by the Legislation Action Committee. The budget is the major consideration in the Capitol, and legislators have tried to put forward legislation that does not include new demands for funding. Also, the phrase "subject to the availability of funding in the annual Budget Act" appears frequently this year. Below is a sample of some of the bills introduced or carried over this year:

School Finance/Equalization.

- **AB 2378 (Houston)**, contrary to conventional wisdom about introducing legislation with a fiscal impact, would appropriate \$150 million to complete the process of equalization of base revenue limit funding.
- **AB 2394 (Coto)** would require the state to begin the process of allocating funds using a weighted-student formula.
- **AB 2277 (Eng)** was introduced after the defeat of Proposition 92 on the February 5 ballot to require that 11% of funds appropriated under proposition 98 be allocated to community colleges.
- **AB 1908 (Wolk)** would, for the 2007-08 fiscal year, authorize local educational agencies to encumber and expend, for purposes determined by its governing body, any unencumbered balances of restricted accounts in its general fund, with certain restrictions.

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- **AB 2145 (Brownley)** would add a new condition for receipt of School and Library Improvement Block Grant funds by requiring a participating school district to develop and adopt a Central Office/Noninstructional Services Improvement Plan each year.

School Facilities

- **AB 100 (Mullin)** is waiting in the Senate with intent language to place a \$9 billion bond before the voters to construct K-12 and college facilities.
- **AB 2864(De Leon)** would allow a portion of new construction grants or a modernization apportionment to be used for the costs of purchase and installation of renewable energy components, including solar panels, power systems, and photovoltaic systems.
- **SB 1657 (Romero)** would require the Department of Education to conduct a school facilities needs assessment statewide, but contains no funds for the undertaking.

Charter Schools

- **AB 2305(Karnette)** would require a chartering entity to be responsible for administering physical fitness tests and the High School Exit Exam.

Postsecondary/Higher Education

- Introduced in the wake of the veto of SB 1 (Cedillo) in 2007, **AB 2083(Nunez)** and **SB 1301(Cedillo)** would require the establishment of procedure to enable undocumented immigrants who are eligible for instate rates to receive institutional financial aid awards. The bill would declare that this provision is a state law within the meaning of a federal statute that permits a state to only provide an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States with eligibility for a state or local public benefit through the enactment of a state law affirmatively providing for that eligibility.
- **AB 2372(Coto)**, The College Affordability Act of 2008, would limit system-wide tuition and fees charged to resident undergraduate students at the California State University and the University of California to those in effect during the 2008-09 academic year.

School Governance

- In cases where a local education agency is in a corrective action status under NCLB, **SB 1592 (Perata)** would give the authority to the Superintendent of Public Instruction to appoint the re-

ceiver or trustee when the State Board of Education decides on that course of action.

Class Size Reduction

- **AB 1893(Garrick)** would allow school districts affected by the October wildfires to claim funding for a class size reduction program if the class size exceeds 20 pupils or if the class is housed with another class.

*Brian Bonner
Education Advocate*

New Legislative Leaders Elected

The Assembly and Senate moved quickly to elect new leaders after voters defeated Proposition 93 on February 5. It would have changed the term limits law and allowed current leaders to continue to serve.

Assemblymember **Karen Bass** was elected to succeed Speaker Nunez, and Senator **Darrell Steinberg** was chosen to replace Senator Perata as the President Pro Tem of the Senate. Senator **Dave Cogdill** will be the new Minority Leader, replacing Dick Ackerman. They will assume the leadership positions this fall. Assemblymember **Mike Villines**, who will not be termed out until 2010, will continue as the Assembly Minority Leader.

Children's Trust Fund

SB 825 (Padilla) is a bill that would establish a pilot program intended to reduce the incidence of shaken baby syndrome by using an evidence based program to educate new parents and other adult caregivers of newborns and young infants relating to the prevention of shaken baby syndrome.

Last year, the California State PTA supported a nearly identical bill, SB 468 (Padilla). However, that bill stalled in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. This new attempt addresses the concerns of the Appropriations Committee by prohibiting utilization of the state's General Fund for funding the pilot program. Instead, the bill authorizes the Department of Social Services to use funds from the State Children's Trust Fund, as well as private donations.

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The Children's Trust Fund was established by the Legislature in 1983 to support the mission of the state's Office of Child Abuse Prevention, a division in the California Department of Social Services. The trust fund promotes programs that provide services that work to strengthen the family, focusing on at-risk families before children get hurt. The Children's Trust Fund receives money in several ways:

- Voluntary donations on Line 56 of the California State Income Tax Return form.
- Fundraisers such as "Run for their Lives" -- an eight km run and one mile "fun" run.
- "Kids Plate" automobile license plate sales.
- United Way campaign.
- United California State Employees campaign

The Trust Fund also accepts private voluntary contributions which can be done by writing to or calling:

California Department of Social Services
Office of Child Abuse Prevention
744 P Street - M.S. 11-82
Sacramento, California 95814
(916) 651-6960 (phone)
(916) 651-6328 (FAX)

Michael Butler
Parent Involvement Advocate

Improving Teen Driving Safety

The California State PTA has taken a Support position on **SB 1114 (Torlakson)**, which would require the Department of Motor Vehicles to collect an additional fee of \$10 for each provisional license application to create the "**Young Driver Education and Safety Fund.**" This fund would support automobile driver's education and training in the public schools under the direction of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Teen driving safety is a high priority for the California State PTA. According to the California Strategic Highway Safety Plan, newly licensed drivers with less than one year of driving experience have the highest crash rate of any driver group. Young drivers are more likely to engage in risky driving behaviors and are the least able to cope with hazardous situations. As a result, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for young drivers. Young drivers make up approximately 6% of California's licensed drivers, but accounted for 21% of the traffic fatalities from 1995-2004.

This Strategic Highway Safety Plan identifies limited funding for education and driver training in public schools as one of the factors affecting the implementation of action items to reduce young driver crashes. The study recommends that we improve the education and behind the wheel training of young drivers; increase parental involvement, knowledge and buy-in to the graduated driver's license; improve the process of testing young drivers to obtain a driver's license; enforce compliance of young drivers with the graduated driver's license and rules of the road; enhance existing positive and constructive reinforcement of young driver behavior; and enhance effective DUI countermeasures targeting drivers under age 21.

Driver's education is not widely offered in our state's public schools where only 19,226 were enrolled in high school driver education classes in the 2006-07 fiscal year, down from 48,000 students in 1997. The cost of private driving instruction for teens is beyond the financial means of many families.

Some suggest that this bill does not go far enough, in that the funding that would be generated would be insufficient to address the magnitude of the issue. CAPTA will continue to monitor the progress of this bill and related efforts to address the serious issue of teen driving safety.

Debbie Look
Community Concerns Advocate

Post Healthcare Reform

Now that the extraordinary session on healthcare reform is complete with little accomplished, the legislature has turned to issues related to the budget crisis. Consequently, it is unclear how much action will take place on health bills prior to the passage of the state budget.

Legislators interested in health issues have several areas of focus. Since the legislature and governor could not agree on health care reform, several legislators have introduced bills to provide health care coverage to children. There are also bills that make it easier for children in the free or reduced lunch program to be enrolled in Medi-Cal.

Nutrition continues to be an important issue. While SB 120 (Padilla), the bill that required chain restaurants to post nutrition information, was vetoed by the Governor, Senator Padilla has reintroduced

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the bill as SB 1420. There is at least one other bill addressing this same issue, as well as bills relating to access to fresh fruits and vegetables and improved school nutrition. The obesity epidemic and the chronic diseases related to it are also areas of focus in this session of the legislature.

Watch for updates on these bills on the website or feel free to contact me for more information.

Shayne Silva
Health Advocate

DC Corner

California PTA Delegation Travels to Nation's Capitol

Ten PTA members from California traveled to the nation's capitol recently to take part in the National PTA Legislation Conference held February 26-28. The three-day event brought together hundreds of child advocates from every state in the union to sharpen advocacy skills, visit elected officials and award legislative excellence for state and local PTAs.

California's own San Ramon Council, 32nd District, was honored with National PTA's first Outstanding Advocacy Award. Nancy Vandell, Council Legislation Chairman, accepted the award on behalf of the Council.

Attendees participated in workshops that included a review of the federal legislative process, PTA issues, the No Child Left Behind Act, communicating the PTA message, motivating for action, and positive personal goal setting. Keynote speaker Daniel Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind*, engaged attendees with his humor and expertise on innovation, competition and the changing world of work.



The California delegation was warmly welcomed on Capitol Hill by legislators and staff members alike. Twenty appointments included Senators Boxer and Feinstein and Representatives Baca, Becerra, Campbell, Capps, Doolittle, Filner, Honda, Lee, McKeon, McNeerney, Miller, Nunes, Pelosi, Sanchez, Schiff, Thompson, Waxman, and Woolsey.

PTA's primary messages included:

- **The Child Nutrition and School Lunch Protection Act**, - PTA supports S.771/H.R. 1363as induced. It would require the U.S. Department of Agriculture to update its school nutrition standards and apply those stands to the whole school.
- **The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind)** - PTA continues to support the original intent of ESEA in helping children of low-income families receive a high-quality education equal to their economically-advantaged peers. PTA supports many of NCLB's provisions, particularly those that expand parent involvement policies, improve the targeting of resources to students and schools most in need, and increased funding for ESEA-NCLB programs. PTA is concerned the law relies too heavily on high stakes testing without looking at other important indicators that impact school performance – resources, physical infrastructure, class size, instructional methods and parent involvement. PTA believes that parents must be continually involved and that it is imperative that parents know exactly why their child's school is failing, what the state is doing about it and the options available to parents and students – all in a very clear and understandable manner.
- **Funding for Education and Child-Related Programs** - PTA believes funding needs to be increased to service all the students and families who are eligible for critical elementary and secondary education programs, including Title I of ESEA-NCLB, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), teacher-quality initiatives, parent resource centers, education technology, Impact Aid, bilingual education programs, and vocational education. Other federal agencies that assist children, families, schools and communities (through Head Start, nutrition, juvenile justice, child protection, child welfare, health-care, environmental protection, and youth service programs) also face funding challenges.

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In particular PTA supports *Parental Information Resource Centers* designed to support school-linked and school-based information to increase parental involvement in children's education.

PTA also supports the *Arts in Education* program authorizing noncompetitive awards to strengthen arts programs and integrating them into core curricula and implementing high quality professional development model programs.

PTA strongly opposes voucher programs.

These messages along with more information can be found on the National PTA website www.pta.org under the *Issues and Action* tab. Read *This Week in Washington* (February 5, 2008) to learn about the full impact of President Bush's proposed Fiscal Year 2009 budget on public education and children's welfare.

House and Senate Committees Pass FY 2008-09 Budgets

Last week the House and Senate Budget Committees passed resolutions in marked contrast to the President's budget released in early February. The Administration's budget included elimination of 47 education programs for nearly \$3.3 billion, along with reductions in an additional 11 programs totaling \$720 million. Both committees these cuts, as well as the President's request to cut \$150 billion to Medicare over five years and billions to Medicaid. They also rejected new fees on health care for veterans and military retirees and propose an alternative to cuts in core job training, health, child welfare, child care, education, nutrition and housing programs that serve low-income families.

The resolutions spell out Congress's basic priorities for spending and taxes. Although the budget passed by Congress is not signed into law by the President and does not set funding levels for specific programs, it serves as an important blueprint by setting the overall amount of money available to the Appropriations Subcommittees to allocate to individual programs under their jurisdiction. It also makes assumptions regarding tax policy and entitlement spending. The full House and Senate are scheduled to debate the committee proposals the week of March 10, before Congress adjourns for its two-week recess, and hope to pass a final budget resolution in early April.

Administration to Appeal 6th Circuit's NCLB Ruling

On February 2 U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced that the Bush administration will appeal a court ruling that revived a lawsuit contending the No Child Left Behind Act is an unfunded federal mandate. A panel of the 6th Circuit Court ruled 2-1 in early January that the states were not on clear notice of their potential financial obligations when they agreed to accept federal funding under NCLB. The ruling found that state and local officials could "reasonably read" the law to conclude the federal government would pay for all costs associated with compliance. Spellings said, "I strongly disagree with the ruling, and believe that if the decision were to stand, it could undermine efforts to improve the education of our nation's children, in particular those students most in need. NCLB is not an unfunded mandate. It is a voluntary compact between the states and the federal government, which asks that in exchange for federal tax dollars, results be demonstrated. This investment is netting solid results and creating an opportunity for every child in America to have access to a quality education."

Linda Mayo
Federal Advocate

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