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CONFERENCE COMMITTEE FINISHES WORK ON 2008-09 STATE BUDGET

Tuesday night the Budget Conference Committee finished reconciling differences between versions of the 2008-09 state fiscal plan drafted by the Assembly and Senate. The plan, adopted along party lines on a 4-2 vote, rejects deep cuts in education and health care and includes \$9.7 billion in new revenue, which is \$1.8 billion lower than what the Senate recommended and \$2.7 billion more in new revenue than what the Governor proposed. A counter proposal to close the budget gap will be offered by the Republican members of the Legislature.

The Conference Committee budget is a balanced approach. It closes tax loopholes and rolls back tax breaks for corporations and the wealthiest Californians and restores money to education, health care and public safety.

On the expenditure side, the committee's plan:

- Provides \$2.3 billion more for K-12 education than proposed by the Governor.
- Restores \$1.5 billion in cuts to health and human services. This includes restoring nearly \$200 million in health care services to some of the state's most vulnerable residents, the reimbursement rate for Medi-Cal providers and federal pass-through funds for the aged, blind and disabled.

- Reduces corrections spending by \$300 million with a reform package that helps lower the prison population.
- Restores \$57 million in financial assistance for college students.

On the revenue side, the committee's plan:

- Reinstates the tax brackets on the wealthiest Californians by reinstating the 10% and 11% tax brackets. Revenue generated: \$5.6 billion.
- Closes a corporate tax loophole for large corporations. Revenue generated: \$1.1 billion.
- Suspends a tax adjustment for upper-income Californians. Revenue generated: \$815 million.
- Rolls back a tax loophole for upper-income Californians. Revenue generated: \$215 million.
- Restores the franchise tax. Revenue generated: \$470 million.
- Steps up tax enforcement. Revenue generated: \$1.5 billion. This is one-time revenue.

The next three weeks are critical. The state faces

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the very real possibility of running short of cash sometime in August, if a bipartisan agreement cannot be worked out.

Pat Dingsdale
Director of Legislation

Speaker Bass Names Three Committee Chairs

On July 7 Assembly Speaker Karen Bass announced the chairs of three Assembly committees for the 2009-2010 legislative session:

- Education – Assemblymember Julia Brownley
- Water, Parks & Wildlife – Assemblymember Jared Huffman
- Agriculture – Assemblymember Cathleen Galgiani

The new session begins on December 1.

Preschool RAND Studies

Earlier this year, both the Superintendent of Public Instruction's P-16 Council and the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence recommended that every child should be provided with quality preschool opportunities. Part of the policy engineering required for effective new legislation arises out of research conducted over the years in the area of Early Childcare and Education. Recent research has been developed and published by the RAND Corporation.

In November 2007 the RAND Corporation released the first two of four studies in their project "California Preschool Study". The first study is titled *Who is Ahead and Who is Behind: Gaps in School Readiness and Student Achievement in the Early Grades for California's Children*. The study concluded that the groups who were falling behind on test scores in second and third grades were the same who were trailing in academic readiness and social skills early in kindergarten. The study asserts that effective pre-k can help narrow the achievement gap by addressing the readiness gap.

The second study is titled *Early Care and Education in the Golden State-Publicly Funded Programs Serving California's Preschool-Aged Children*. His-

torically, early care and education (ECE) programs have been publicly subsidized with two policy priorities in mind -- early childhood education to prepare children for school, and child care support for low-income families in order for the wage earners to obtain and retain employment.

At the federal level, the US Department of Education funds Title I Preschool while the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) funds Head Start and subsidizes child care for children living below the poverty line who are enrolled in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Programs administered at the state level are also characterized by being administered by agencies from both the education and social services arenas. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) licenses center-based and home-based child care under Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations and uses federal TANF funds to subsidize child care for parents enrolled in Stage 1 of CalWorks. The California Department of Education (CDE) through its Child Development Division administers state and federal funds to provide State Preschool and General Child Care and Development (CCD) programs governed by Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. CDE also administers programs that subsidize child care for parents in State 2 and 3 of CalWorks. The RAND study identified 11 distinct programs promoting child development and/or providing affordable childcare. However the quality of these programs varies and current funding levels do not provide incentives for higher quality programs.

The third study from RAND was released in June, 2008 and is titled *Prepared to Learn- The Nature and Quality of Early Care and Education for Preschool-Age Children in California*. The study shows that the use of center-based early care and education is the norm for California families with three- and four-year olds, but these programs fall short on some quality benchmarks. Most significantly, the study shows that those children who could benefit most from high-quality preschool--those children with the largest gap in school readiness and later school achievement -- are least likely to be in a high quality preschool program.

A fourth study due out later this year will synthesize and integrate the results from the three focused studies, as well as related prior research. For more information on the RAND studies, visit www.RAND.org.

Meanwhile, some important legislation has been working its way through the legislature this year.

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California State PTA has adopted a SUPPORT position on two bills, **AB 2759 (Jones)** and **SB 1629 (Steinberg)**.

AB 2759 would consolidate all the State Preschool, Pre-kindergarten and Family Literacy, and General Child Care programs serving preschool aged children to create the California State Preschool Program. **SB 1629** would establish a commission to create an Early Learning Quality Improvement System. Funded by First 5 California, the commission will analyze the existing early care and education infrastructure and identify the strengths, gaps, and barriers to achieving higher levels of quality.

California State PTA believes that well-designed preschool programs that serve children one or two years before kindergarten entry can improve measures of school readiness, raise performance on academic achievement tests in the early elementary grades, generate sustained effects on academic achievement into the middle-school years, and produce other education gains such as reduced special education use and grade repetition and higher rates of high school graduation.

Michael Butler
Parent Involvement Advocate

PTA Supports Firearm Safety Bills

California State PTA has a long history and proud tradition of supporting legislation for the safety and protection of children and youth. In particular PTA has long advocated for firearm safety and awareness efforts to counter the epidemic of firearm injuries and deaths occurring among young people. PTA recently took a SUPPORT position on **AB 2235 (De Saulnier)**, which would require the state to specify that any handgun *without* an owner authorized feature would be considered unsafe, once such technology is readily available. An “owner authorized handgun” is defined a handgun that has a permanent programmable biometric feature as part of its original manufacture that renders the handgun incapable of being fired except when activated by the lawful owner or other authorized user. An owner-authorized handgun could not be fired by a child or teen, unless authorized by the parent or guardian, thereby reducing the likelihood of injury or death through accidental firing of a weapon or a suicide attempt by despondent teens. Two universi-

ties and one private company are currently developing the biometric gun technology, with the estimated average cost to include this technology of \$50 per gun.

Imitation firearms are another potential hazard jeopardizing the safety of children and youth. **AB 353 (Solorio)** would make it an offense to display or expose an imitation firearm in a public school setting. CAPTA is supporting this bill as we agree that imitation or replica pellet guns such as airsoft style guns have no place in our schools. Given the high muzzle velocities associated with some of these guns, the potential for harm is significant. In addition, situations have arisen where children or youth have been injured or killed by law enforcement officials unaware that the weapon being brandished was, in fact, an imitation firearm.

School Safety Efforts Continue

PTA continues to support bills designed to improve the safety of the school environment for all students. **AB 2762 (Eng)** would require a school employee, who becomes aware that a serious act of harassment or discrimination has occurred, to report the incident to the principal immediately. The principal would then be required to investigate and to take prompt action to remedy the situation. Action may include disciplinary measures, counseling and care to ensure the safety of the targeted pupil. The bill would also require regular reporting, by schools, of incidents of harassment or discrimination occurring on their campus each semester. We believe that every child is entitled to a safe and positive school climate and that schools must act in a timely and effective manner in responding to threats to the safety and well-being of students.

Debbie Look
Community Concerns Advocate

AB 2115 Would Set Uniform Minimum Standards for Charter School Governing Boards

AB 2115 (Mullin) would address problems encountered by several charter schools that have failed or had their charters revoked.

Given that charter schools are primarily funded with public funds, AB 2115 would require governing boards of charter schools to follow the same conflict-of-interest laws that public school boards must

follow. Further, it would prohibit employees of charter schools from serving on charter school

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boards, and the bill would require charter school governing boards to comply with the same public notice laws that apply to their chartering entities. AB 2115 would set the following minimum eligibility criteria for charter school board members:

- 18 years of age or older;
- A citizen of the state;
- A resident of the area defined by the attendance boundaries of the school district or county board of education that approved the petition establishing the charter school;
- A registered voter; and
- Not disqualified by the Constitution or state law from holding a civil office.

A consequence of prohibition on school employees serving on their governing boards would be increased opportunities for parents and community members to serve on charter school boards. The California State PTA has long advocated for greater parental involvement as a means to improve student achievement and the quality of education provided to the students of California. AB 2115 is consistent with this goal and the general principle of the California State PTA that supports adherence to strict ethical practices at all levels of government.

AB 2115 has passed the Senate and will be heard in the Assembly for concurrence in the Senate amendments. We expect that the bill will go to the Governor and urge PTAs at all levels to ask their Assembly Members to vote yes on the bill and to ask the Governor to sign the bill.

*Brian Bonner
Education Advocate*

Special Education, Career Technical Education Bills Advance

AB 2555 (Torrico) requires the existing notice to parents of pupils with disabilities about their rights and procedural safeguards to include information regarding the state special schools.

The state special schools were established in statute in 1976, as part of the public school system to provide educational services to pupils, who because of severe hearing or visual loss and educational needs, cannot be provided an appropriate educational program and related services in the public school. State special schools serve pupils age 3-22

and include the California School for the Blind in Fremont and the California School for the Deaf in Riverside.

AB 2555 is currently in the Assembly with concurrence in the Senate and amendments pending. The concern with the bill is potential cost related to the development of a new information packet. It may be on or after July 12.

AB 876 (Davis) would request the California State University and the University of California to take specified actions with respect to the recognition of career technical education coursework in connection with the admissions criteria of the respective universities.

The State Board of Education adopted Model Curriculum Standards for Career Technical Education in May 2005 and adopted the curriculum frameworks for those standards in January 2007. The standards are organized in 15 industry sectors of interrelated occupations and broad industries. The standards identify 58 different career pathways and the academic and technical courses required for each pathway.

The CSU and the UC have established common high school coursework requirements for undergraduate admissions. Students who take courses that meet these minimum requirements and who meet other specified criteria are eligible to apply and be considered for admission. These courses are commonly referred to the "a-g" requirements:

The need for AB 876 is great. Recent research suggests that providing learning opportunities that incorporate contextual and applied learning with rigorous academics enables students to be more engaged in school and prepares them for education and careers following high school. Multiple pathway programs combine core academics with technical courses related to a specific field. Data provided by the California Department of Education indicate that the number of CTE classes declined approximately 24 percent between 1997-98 and 2006-07.

Proponents argue that the strong focus on closing the achievement gap and getting more underrepresented students into four-year universities has had the effect of "squeezing out" CTE courses to make room for more courses that meet "a-g" requirements or otherwise enable students to be more competitive in the university admission process. To the extent that AB 876 creates opportunities for schools to work with the CSU and UC in developing programs that could provide additional ways for CTE courses and multiple pathway programs to be recognized in the college admission process, this bill could help end the "either/or" debate about whether students

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need more rigorous academics or more technical courses to be prepared for success after high school. This bill is currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Susan Solomon
Education Advocate

Update on Testing, Teacher Credentialing and Curriculum Bills

June 27 was the deadline for policy committees to hear bills. Many of the remaining bills are in one of the fiscal committees pending a budget agreement. The deadline for fiscal committees to hear and report bills is August 15.

AJR 64 (Mullin), introduced on June 5, urges the 110th Congress to recognize the importance of curriculum and instruction that covers all subjects, including history/social science, science, art, music, and physical education, when considering the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal No Child Left Behind Act. PTA took a **SUPPORT** position at the June Legislation Action Committee meeting.

Numerous researchers have found that one impact of the focus on English language arts and mathematics that is built into our state and federal assessment and accountability systems is a reduction in the amount of instructional time spent on non-tested subjects and an increase in time spent on tested subjects, resulting in the narrowing of the curriculum. This narrowing has in turn been shown to negatively impact test scores in language arts and math, to disproportionately occur in schools with large numbers of high risk students, to contribute to the continuing race and poverty based achievement gaps, and to decrease pupil motivation. This resolution provides information on many of these research findings, and urges education policy-makers at all levels to take steps to counter this effect.

Another bill supported by PTA, **SB 1110 (Scott)**, requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to minimize, to the extent permitted by federal law, the amount of testing time and duplication required to complete the assessments in Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. It is in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 531 (Salas) would require that the history-social science framework and instructional materials for grade 4 and either grade 11 or 12, when they are adopted in the course of the next submission cycle, include the case of *Mendez v. Westminster School District* and the role it played in the civil rights movement and desegregation of public schools in California and the nation.

The list of coauthors has grown as the bill has moved through the legislative process. The bill is now on the Senate Floor. The only registered opposition is the Office of the Secretary of Education, so if the bill goes to the Governor for his signature it may be vetoed.

Another bill important to PTA, based on the resolution adopted by delegates at the 2006 Convention, is **AB 2544 (Mullin)**. It would require the SPI to develop a model civic education professional development program.

Cecelia Mansfield
Education Advocate

DC Corner

Medicaid/SCHIP Moratoria Extended; Farm Bill Veto Overridden; PTA Joins New Task Force

On June 30, 2008, the President signed the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008 with six Medicaid regulations. The bill (H.R. 2642) amends the Medicare, Medicaid, and State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Extension Act of 2007 to extend until April 1, 2009, the moratoria on certain restrictions relating to Medicaid coverage or payment for rehabilitation services or school-based administrative outreach and school-based transportation for special needs students. A permanent solution will be negotiated following the November 08 election. Left out of the package was the seventh regulation dealing with reimbursement for Outpatient Services which may be finalized in November. PTA actively supported the moratoria extension.

On June 18, Congress overrode the President's veto on H.R. 6124, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, enacting all parts of the Farm Bill into law including long-overdue improvements for the Food Stamp Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program. Public Law 110-246 has a \$289 billion price tag of which more than \$10 billion is for increases for domestic nutrition programs over ten years.

The bill's nutrition title promotes the health and well-being of children and low-income families through:

- Increasing funding by \$1.02 billion for the USDA Snack Program, which helps schools provide healthy snacks to students during after-school activities and expands the program to all 50 states
- Creating a demonstration project that will evaluate strategies to address obesity among low-income communities.
- Providing \$5 million per year for Community Food Projects for grants to innovative community projects.
- Targeting \$1 billion for the free Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Programs to schools with large shares of low-income families over the 2009 to 2017 period.
- Reasserting the importance of USDA nutrition monitoring, which works with the USDA dietary guidelines and provides the most accurate picture of American dietary habits.

A campaign calling for a **Broader, Bolder Approach to Education** has been launched by new task force of national policy experts—with diverse religious and political affiliations, and covering fields including education, social welfare, health, housing, and civil rights—including National PTA. The task force seeks to break the decades-long cycle of reform efforts that have promised much, but achieved far too little. The task force points to the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law and charges that the nation's education and youth development policy has erred by relying on school improvement alone to raise achievement levels of disadvantaged children.

The new approach recognizes the centrality of formal schooling, but it also recognizes the importance of high-quality early childhood and pre-school programs, after-school and summer programs, and programs that develop parents' capacity to support their children's education. It seeks to build working relationships between schools and surrounding community institutions.

The new approach pays attention not only to basic academic skills and cognitive growth narrowly defined, but to development of the whole person, including physical health, character, social development, and non-academic skills, from birth through the end of formal schooling. It assigns value to the new knowledge and skills that young people need to become effective partici-

pants in a global environment, including citizenship, creativity, and the ability to respect and work with persons from different backgrounds. The Broader, Bolder Approach includes the following priorities:

- Continued to pursuit of school improvement efforts.
- Increased investment in developmentally appropriate and high-quality early childhood, pre-school, and kindergarten education.
- Increased investment in health services.
- Focused attention on the time students spend out of school.

To learn more about this task force visit www.bolderapproach.org and www.pta.org.

*Linda Mayo
Federal Advocate*



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