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Our Purpose

To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.

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Get Out and Vote November 2

- California State PTA Supports Propositions 24 and 25 – California State PTA has adopted positions on three ballot measures for the

California State PTA Legislation Conference: 9 Million Reasons to Speak Up Monday, February 7 to Tuesday, February 8, 2011

Join seasoned advocates and newcomers for two days in Sacramento. Step up and make a difference for the more than 9 million children in California. Details will be posted to our website. Click [here](#).



From the Director of Legislation

Yes on Proposition 25 on November 2

By Debbie Look
Director of Legislation

Once again, California has adopted a budget that is many days late and many dollars short. And that leaves the state's children and families fundamentally shortchanged.

Particularly distressing is the way the effort to reach the onerous two-thirds vote for passage creates an air of a high-stakes flea market. Those last few votes are traded for a few narrow, favored interests. The biggest losers are often the most vulnerable children and families of California. That is why we need Proposition 25, the On Time Budget Act.

Proposition 25 would improve California's budget process by making three important changes to the way the State Legislature does business. It would require the state budget to be passed with a simple majority; protect taxpayers by maintaining the two-thirds vote requirement for any tax increases; and hold politicians accountable for failing to do their job.

If Proposition 25 is approved, legislators will forfeit their pay and benefits for each day the budget is overdue — and they will not be allowed to pay themselves back later. It's a simple formula: no budget means no pay or benefits.

November 2010 statewide election. **SUPPORT** for Propositions 24 and 25; **NEUTRAL** for Proposition 19. For more information, click [here](#).

- **Learn about the candidates for State Superintendent of Public Instruction.** Become an informed voter! Check out candidate responses to questions posed by California State PTA. Click [here](#).
- **Download the Special Election Edition of PTA in California**, a voter-education project of California State PTA. Click [here](#).

Worth Mentioning

- **Ed-Data** released its first report of the year – the Accountability Progress Report. For API and AYP growth statistics, click [here](#).
- **New Senate Republican Leader** – Sen. Bob Dutton (R-Rancho Cucamonga) was elected as the Senate Republican leader, in a seamless transition with the former Republican Leader, Sen. Dennis Hollingsworth (R-Murrieta).

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The opponents of Proposition 25 are misleading voters with claims that it will allow legislators to raise taxes without the two-thirds vote required by the state constitution. It's simply not true and is a disservice to voters. Proposition 25 will not change the two-thirds vote required to raise taxes — it just allows a simple majority vote for passage of the state budget.

Right now, California is one of only three states that require a two-thirds vote for passage of a state budget. Those who defend preserving the two-thirds vote requirement as a way to hold down government spending ignore the fact that state budgets have continued to grow despite its "protections." They also ignore the expensive horse-trading that goes on to get those votes.

Simple majority vote budgets work well for 47 other states. There is every reason to assume it will benefit Californians by discouraging political games at budget time.

In the last 20 years, California's state legislature has failed to meet the budget deadline 17 times – that's an 85 percent failure rate – driving California's credit rating to the lowest among the states, and costing taxpayers millions in interest payments to banks as a result. This is money better spent on schools and children's health programs than banks! Clearly it's time for a change. Partisan politics will not solve California's budget crisis. We need debate, compromise and solutions – not the annual spectacle of the state budget being held hostage by a small group of lawmakers more interested in politics than progress.

Proposition 25 will hold legislators accountable at budget time – and it will protect taxpayers by encouraging lawmakers to stop making closed-door deals that cost regular taxpayers dearly, and start moving forward with real solutions for our troubled economy. It will allow us to set the priorities that matter to us as Californians, and make urgently needed investments in our children and our future.

To read California State PTA's analysis of Proposition 25, click [here](#).

For more information, see the Yes on 25 campaign website: www.endbudgetgridlock.com.

State Budget

Governor vetoes \$1 billion in services to most vulnerable children and families, funding for state educational data system

By Cecelia Mansfield
Education and Budget Advocate

One hundred days into the new fiscal year, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger finally signed the 2010-11 budget on Friday evening, Oct. 8, after vetoing more than \$1 billion in spending for critical programs agreed to earlier. The late budget set a record as the latest in California's history.

Using his line-item veto authority, the Governor vetoed 23 items from the \$87.5 billion budget sent to him by the Legislature. Some of these vetoes included the following spending cuts:

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- \$256 million from CalWORKs Stage 3 child care, which serves working families. This reduction will terminate child care for approximately 56,000 children, effective Nov. 1, 2010.
- \$80 million from the Child Welfare Services Program that would have fully restored the funds vetoed by the Governor as part of the July 2009 budget agreement. Together with the loss of \$53 million in federal matching funds, abused and neglected children in the foster care system will face severe consequences.
- \$5 million from the Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program.
- \$132.9 million reduction of reimbursements for K-12 schools' mandate claims from 2004-05 to 2008-09. The Governor's veto also suspends the mandate for K-12 schools to provide mental health services for special education students.
- \$6.4 million in federal funds for the development and support of the California Longitudinal Pupil Data Systems (CALPADS) and the California Teachers Integration Data Systems (CALTIDES).
- \$3.9 million reduction for the California School Information Services (CSIS) program that assists local school districts with the electronic transfer of student records.
- \$775,000 by eliminating the Alternative Schools Accountability Model (ASAM) that provides data for 450,000 students in alternative schools that serve highly mobile and at-risk students.

California State PTA and other child advocates expressed anger and disappointment in these vetoes that come on top of the suspension of Proposition 98 and deferrals of payments to school districts, as well as other cuts to important services for California's children and families, with no new revenue.

Although the budget signing ended the impasse that impacted so many Californians, it does little or nothing to address the issues that will immediately confront the new Governor and Legislature in January 2011. The State Controller said that despite some increase in September receipts, there may not be sufficient cash to pay the bills due by the end of October. He estimates that the state will have only \$3.5 billion cash on hand to pay \$8.3 billion in unpaid invoices that have piled up during the budget stalemate. "It's difficult to celebrate a budget deal that does so little after so long," said the Controller.

The California Budget Project has published a helpful analysis of the 2010 budget agreement, including a side-by-side comparison of the Governor's May Revision, the Aug. 6 Conference Committee budget plan, and the budget agreement passed by the Legislature in the early morning hours of Oct. 8. Comments on vetoed items are also included. The analysis, which will be updated as new information is available, can be found at www.californiabudgetbites.org.

The independent Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) has also posted a document that highlights the major features of California's 2010-11 budget at www.lao.ca.gov.

Community Concerns

From truant to dropout: Developing intervention systems in California

By Patty Christiansen

Community Concerns Advocate

“Go straight to school,” my mom would say. “Officer Wade will catch you if you ‘play hooky.’” Officer Wade was the truancy officer in our small Midwestern town, and he would roam the town looking for students who never made it to school. Times have changed. Nowadays, students sometimes still don’t make it to school, yet Officer Wade is no longer on duty. Luckily, California has taken two giant steps forward in dealing with the devastating toll of truancy.

If I asked you to close your eyes and build a picture in your mind of a chronically truant student, what would your picture look like? How old would the truant in your mind’s eye be? Is the student male or female? My guess is that you may have created a picture of a rebellious middle or high school student. Yet, in California, 40 percent of all truant students are in elementary school, ages 6-11 years old! Chronically truant students are defined as students who are absent from school without a valid excuse for 10 percent or more of the school days in a school year. The disturbing fact is that chronically truant elementary school students become our secondary school dropouts.

Current law states, and California State PTA strongly believes, that children should be in school. This year, California State PTA lobbied to support two bills in the area of chronic truancy – **Senate Bill 1317 (Leno)** and **Senate Bill 1357 (Steinberg)**.

As it is the responsibility of parents to get children to school, SB 1317 will make it a misdemeanor for parents to allow their elementary school children to become chronic truants. But, this bill will also create an assistance plan for parents willing to enter into a Deferred Entry of Judgment program. The assistance plan is tailored to the needs of the family, and could include parenting classes, mental health assistance, drug abuse treatment, child care assistance options and more.

How will our local schools know which children are chronically truant? SB 1357 will support the development of early warning systems to identify pupils who are chronically absent. With the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) in place, our state is now capable of issuing periodic reports on absenteeism to local schools and school districts. Early intervention is critical so that schools can provide the support needed to intervene before a chronic truant becomes a dropout.

We are happy to report that both bills were signed into law by the Governor, giving California a giant boost in the quest to provide the best education and the brightest future for all students.

Education

Honor special education teachers on Dec. 3

By Nancy Vandell
Education Advocate

PTAs have an opportunity to show appreciation to special education teachers in their schools on Dec.10. **Assembly Concurrent Resolution 99 (Buchanan)** proclaims Dec. 3, 2010, to be the *Day of the Special Educator*, and urges Californians to recognize the dedication and hard work of special educators in teaching pupils with unique needs.

Most parents understand the special qualities it takes to be a teacher. Teachers must have academic knowledge as well as the ability to convey curriculum in a way that children with a variety of learning styles can understand. They must be nurturing, yet maintain discipline; inspire creativity, yet meet standards.

Special education teachers need to have all of these skills and more. They help children with a wide range and level of disabilities reach goals that will enable them to become productive members of society. In partnership with parents, medical personnel and students themselves, these teachers provide individualized interventions that enable students to have successful outcomes in careers and in life.

In addition to the challenges of teaching, special education staff members have additional responsibilities that involve copious paperwork to fulfill legal requirements. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) process is arduous. While it is essential in providing a collaborative "game plan" for student achievement, it is very time consuming for the special education teacher. Most teachers end up working on IEP paperwork at home after a full day of nurturing students.

Being a special education teacher is so stressful that many leave the profession for general education or non-teaching careers. There is a shortage of speech and language pathologists, resource specialists, special day class teachers, school psychologists, behaviorists and more.

As ACR 99 says, "Special educators exhibit qualities of compassion, patience, and flexibility, and are the unsung heroes who pull all of the pieces together and make things clear for the pupil." Parents – let's make the most of this opportunity to recognize their expertise and dedication on December 10!

Parent Involvement

Didn't get the memo?

By Michael Butler
Parent Involvement Advocate

California State PTA has had a long-standing interest in promoting financial literacy, especially in the schools. This year, PTA took an Approve position on **Assembly Bill 2457 (Salas)**, a bill which would establish a Financial Literacy Fund for the purpose of improving financial literacy by offering instructional materials to citizens of California. Revenue for the fund would come from donations.

The bill passed both houses of the Legislature and was sent to the Governor.

The Governor vetoed the bill, indicating that the bill was not needed because he had already established, within the office of the Governor, the *Bank on California* program, which he says includes some financial literacy components.

Bank on California is a statewide initiative launched by the Governor in December 2008 to help “unbanked Californians” – residents without checking or savings accounts – open accounts. In its first year, 110,064 accounts were opened under the program by the previously “unbanked.” The program also emphasizes financial education; according to the Governor’s press release, it has offered more than 244 financial education classes serving more than 2,650 people during the program’s first year.

You can find out more about the Governor’s *Bank on California* program by going to www.bankoncalifornia.ca.gov. You may have to search a little deeper into the website to find educational and financial literacy resources. You will have to judge for yourself the ease and effectiveness of the materials you find there.

Education

Late budget diverts the Legislature from addressing critical education issues

By Patty Scripter
Education Advocate

In the words of Yogi Berra, the recently adjourned legislative session was “déjà vu all over again.” The late state budget once again diverted the Legislature’s attention away from addressing critical education issues such as assessment, charter schools and teacher evaluation.

At the federal level, *Race to the Top* and the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) reauthorization placed assessment and accountability in the forefront of education reform discussions. California State PTA supported a bill, **Assembly Bill 391 (Torlakson)**, that called for an independent evaluation of California’s Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. Initially authorized in 1997, the STAR Program requires testing of students in English language arts, mathematics, science and history/social science at specified grade levels. California has spent millions on the statewide testing system and administered thousands of tests to students in grades 2-11, yet has never conducted an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the STAR program. California State PTA has long supported multiple measures of student achievement; we saw AB 391 as an opportunity to study and begin a redesign of the STAR program to better assess student learning. AB 391 made it to the Governor’s desk, as did last year’s predecessor **Assembly Bill 476**, where it was vetoed. Given the impending sunset and potential reauthorization of the STAR program, the Legislature’s need for an evaluation of the program is clear and this matter will likely be back.

California State PTA will continue to advocate for a statewide assessment system that provides not only student-level data, including how student learning develops over time, but also school- and district-based data that enables teachers, administrators, parents and community members to determine if student learning across all classes, grade levels and schools is consistently meeting expectations. Moving away from the notion of

assessment as judgment and competition, and moving toward assessment as a tool to improve classroom instruction and student learning should be the primary goal of a revamped STAR program. With California's adoption of the Common Core Standards (CCS), a commitment to include CCS common assessments, and the potential need to adopt changes to meet the definition of high quality for ESEA reauthorization, this issue should be front and center in next year's legislative session.

California State PTA again supported legislation that was ultimately vetoed by the Governor; **Assembly Bill 572 (Brownley)** would have established uniform standards for open meetings and conflicts of interest for charter school governing boards. With the current focus from the federal government on the expansion of the number of charter schools, this issue will likely be back. PTA will continue to advocate for accountability and oversight consistent with our general principles.

A movie, a lawsuit and a newspaper series focused attention on the question of how to evaluate effective teaching. **Senate Bill 955 (Huff)** and **Senate Bill 1285 (Steinberg)**, both watched by PTA in this legislative session, looked at the teacher evaluation and layoff process. Only time will tell if the Legislature will actually make progress on all these issues.

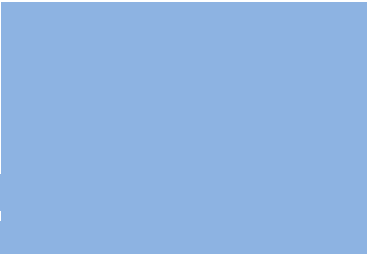
Health

New laws spotlight whooping cough and childhood obesity

By Shayne Silva
Health Advocate

The most immediate consequence of this legislative session for students is contained in **Assembly Bill 354 (Arambula)**. Whooping cough (pertussis) has been widespread in California during 2010. The California Department of Public Health recommends that all Californians 10 years and older receive a booster shot against pertussis. The immunization is known as Tdap. AB 354, signed into law by the Governor, requires all middle school students to receive a pertussis booster shot. For the 2011-12 school year only, all students entering grades 7 through 12 will need proof of a Tdap booster shot before starting school. This requirement goes into effect July 1, 2011. Beginning July 1, 2012 and beyond, all students entering the seventh grade will need proof of a Tdap booster shot before starting school. AB 354 was supported by California State PTA.

In other health news, only one of the anti-obesity bills sponsored by the Governor passed into law. **Senate Bill 1413 (Leno)** requires that fresh, free drinking water be available in school cafeterias. Another anti-obesity bill, **Assembly Bill 2084 (Brownley)**, was also signed into law. AB 2084 provides specific guidelines for the beverages served to children in licensed day care centers. Recent studies have shown that almost 20 percent of preschool children are obese; that percentage has doubled in the past few years. Additional research has shown that the consumption of sweetened drinks, including more than 6 ounces of juice per day, contributes to the incidence of obesity in preschool children. This new law limits the amount of sweetened drinks, including juice, which can be served to preschoolers.



The California State PTA Health Commission has identified obesity in children as one of its main priorities. We are pleased that these PTA-supported bills, aimed at improving the health of our children, are now the law in California.
