

California State PTA 112th Annual Convention

President's Report – Jo A.S. Loss

April 30, 2011, Long Beach, CA

This is how I started my term, and I wanted to be reminded of how positive I needed the expectations to be. I was determined to begin by thinking it is a wonderful world.

So here we are, 22 months gone! A little worn, definitely wiser, but my shoes are still cute, and my hair is still sticking up. There are two months left, and I can create a lot of chaos in two months, so don't count me out yet.

Four years ago I made the scariest decision of my life, to run for president of the organization that I believed in wholeheartedly, but that hadn't chosen me as the candidate. The election process was agonizing and if I'd known, I'm not sure I would have gone through with it. But you, the delegates, gave me the chance to serve, and I thank you for the opportunity.

There is a delegate here today who once went to the microphone and told the president, Gloria Blackwell, that someday it was going to be her on that stage. She was committed to becoming the California State PTA president. This delegate is currently serving on the State Board of Managers and hopes that she is getting closer to her goal. I really wish her well. If any of you out there would like to think about it, why don't you come up and check out the view from the podium after this session? It is way different than being in the audience! Most of you will never have an experience like I did last year where we lost a comma in the convention rules that resulted in a lesson in parliamentary procedure for all of us.

I don't think one could ever anticipate the time and energy you expend as president so I need to thank my family for their understanding. I hope that they haven't given away my bed.

I'd like to recognize and thank the elected officers of the Board of Directors for all their hard work. I especially need to acknowledge two officers who agreed to serve this term just because I asked them to, Sue King, parliamentarian, and Debbie Look director of legislation. Particularly because they didn't hurt me, even though they often threatened to.

Thanks also to the Board of Managers for their continued efforts to meet the mission of the California State PTA and enhance the lives of California's children and families. Each member contributes time and energy as a passionate volunteer.

While our association is powered by volunteers, we are supported by a critical foundation of professionals in our office staff. We are very fortunate to have employees that understand and recognize the value of our work. I appreciate their positive attitudes and thank them for their part in the accomplishments

of this term. They truly understand the value of customer service!

And although I love to tease him about being the new kid, our Executive Director Paul Richman is on his fourth year with the California State PTA. While I am thinking he may ask for leave due to post-traumatic stress after this term, I have appreciated his counsel and opinions as we have worked together, and I hope become friends.



Other organizations often refer to PTA as a sleeping giant. Well, I believe that the sleeping giant woke up this term, and she's got a terrible case of bedhead! I am very proud of the inroads that we have made in making sure the PTA is included in conversations, considered in decisions and looked upon as a knowledgeable resource. PTA has taken advantage of many, many opportunities to network and meet people and, with other organizations, to advance our mission. Not all of these meetings result in immediate advantages but usually something positive occurs. We have opened the door to groups like Public Advocates, First Five, the ACLU, School2Home, or the Judicial Council, who are not necessarily the usual partners. Yet, I believe that starting these relationships now will be worth it at some point down the road. We have also strengthened our bonds with some ongoing partnerships and established some parameters with others. We certainly have a new perspective within the Education Coalition.

In addition, I've really enjoyed the opportunities that being president has given me. I am happy when I am given the chance to do a training or a public speaking engagement. This term, I've spoken to groups as different as the Rotary Club and the California Association of Physical Education, Dance and Recreation. I had the chance to visit 17 of our 29 PTA districts – which translates into a tremendous amount of time in the car and airports! I've joined a couple dozen PTAs and talked to hundreds of enthusiastic members. I hope I get to talk to many of you here during convention.

Being your president has opened the door to meeting with politicians, educators, businesses, foundations and others. Some have been supportive, some not. But each encounter has added to my repertoire of skills for the next time, and I'm confident that they knew more about PTA than they did when we started. Surprisingly quickly, I am revved up to get to the next place to tell someone new about PTA.

A huge part of this job is being an ambassador for PTA, which was all right with me because I used all these meetings to justify buying new shoes! Just kidding! I enjoyed the wide variety of people I met and liked hearing their impressions of what PTA is.

Each day of the last 22 months has brought something new to the mix. Sometimes it is technology, sometimes it is logistics and sometimes it is people. All of them challenged my skill sets and enabled me to grow and develop. And I believe that the California State PTA has flourished!

As you heard two years ago, I have no rhythm, I can't sing and I can't dance, but I have been able to develop the art of leadership.

Thank you all for electing me to serve you as president. It's been a grand adventure.