

Fourth District Legislative Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

NOVEMBER 2011

Mid-Year Budget Cuts Are Still a Possibility

California is not collecting as much tax revenue as projected and this could trigger mid-year budget cuts.

Lawmakers and Governor Jerry Brown developed this year's budget on the assumption that state revenues would increase by \$4 billion. For the first three months of the fiscal year (July to September), the state took in \$705.5 million less than anticipated.

Officials at the Department of Finance say it remains possible that the \$4 billion increase will come later in the year. They also say that recent tax changes have made revenue projections less reliable.

The budget agreement states that budget cuts will be triggered if the state Director of Finance determines on December 15 that revenues will not meet certain targets.

If the anticipated revenues are between \$87.5 billion and \$86.5 billion, there will be specific cuts, totaling \$600 million, to higher education, social services, prisons, and other agencies.

If tax income falls below \$86.5 billion, there will be an additional \$1.9 billion reduction that would cut \$1.5 billion from K-12 education. The budget agreement included legislation that allows school districts to reduce the school year by up to seven days to achieve the mid-year reduction. In addition, \$248 million in funding for home-to-school transportation would be eliminated. Community colleges would lose \$72 million in addition to \$30 million lost in the first round of cuts.

Lawsuit is Filed Against State Budget Agreement

A coalition of California education groups has filed a lawsuit against the state, claiming that the current budget violates Prop. 98 and denies public schools \$2.1 billion that they should receive this year.

So far, K-12 schools are receiving about the same amount of funding as last year. However, the state is expecting an increase in tax revenues, and Prop. 98 requires 40 percent of that to go to education.

Instead, state legislators and Governor Jerry Brown agreed to divert \$5.1 billion in sales tax revenues to coun-

Calendar of Events

Advocacy Roundtable

Friday, December 9, 10:30 a.m. to noon
Capistrano Unified School District Education Center
33122 Valle Road, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675
Speakers: **Don Wagner**, Assembly Member, 70th District, and **Rick Simpson**, Deputy Chief of Staff to Assembly Speaker John Pérez

★All PTA members are welcome.

Advocacy Roundtable

Friday, January 20, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Fountain Valley Unified School District
10055 Slater Avenue, Fountain Valley 92708
Speakers to be announced.

★All PTA members are welcome.

ties to pay for inmates who are being shifted from state prisons to county jails, among other costs. The legislature passed AB 114, which the Governor signed, requiring school districts to maintain current staffing and program levels for the 2011-12 school year, effectively blocking teacher layoffs. In the same bill, lawmakers agreed to seek new revenues on the 2012 ballot and to repay the \$2.1 billion over five years if the ballot measure fails.

The lawsuit was filed in San Francisco Superior Court by the California School Boards Association, the Association of California School Administrators, and the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Turlock unified school districts.

In addition to objecting to the withheld funding, coalition members are concerned that the budget sets a bad precedent and that state leaders may use similar maneuvers in the future to pay schools below the Prop. 98 requirements.

Prop. 98 generally guarantees that K-14 public education will receive 40 percent of each year's state budget. In actuality, that has happened only twice since the measure was approved by voters in 1998. During a fiscal crisis, lawmakers may use other formulas (called tests) to determine the level of education funding, or may suspend Prop. 98. The money that should have gone to education in that year becomes a debt, known as the maintenance factor, which must be repaid at some point. The maintenance factor currently stands at about \$9.5 billion.

Governor Brown Signs Some Education Bills, Rejects Others

At the end of the legislative session, Governor Jerry Brown considered about 600 bills and either signed them into law or vetoed them. They included a number of education bills that California State PTA supported. The most important of these was **AB 1156**, by Assembly Member Mike Eng, which PTA sponsored and worked hard to pass. Beginning July 1, 2012, this bill encourages the inclusion of policies and procedures aimed at the prevention of bullying. It requires training of school site personnel in the prevention of bullying, and gives victims of bullying priority for transferring out of a school, if requested.

Other bills supported by PTA and signed into law by Governor Brown include:

AB 25 (Hayashi) School athletics: concussions and head injuries.

An athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury during a school-sponsored activity must be removed from that activity immediately for the remainder of the day. The athlete is prohibited from returning to that activity until he or she is evaluated by, and receives written clearance from, a licensed health care provider.

SB 300 (Hancock) Science Content Standards

The State Superintendent of Education is required to convene a group of science experts to develop science content standards. The superintendent must hold at least two public hearings and submit the standards to the State Board of Education by July 30, 2013.

AB 250 (Brownley) Instructional Materials

California has adopted Common Core State Standards that require new instructional materials. However, due to the tight budget, the state has postponed adoption of new textbooks until the 2015-16 school year. This bill calls for the development of a curriculum framework and assessment aligned to Common Core Standards and postpones ending the STAR testing program until Jan 2015, when the new test is in place.

PTA did not get requested amendments to this bill:

AB1330 (Furutani) Graduation requirements: career technical education. Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, a high school student may substitute a course in career technical education for a course in visual or performing arts or a foreign language to meet graduation requirements for high school.

Among the bills vetoed by the governor are:

AB 165 (Lara) Pupil fees

PTA Position: support.

In response to the ACLU lawsuit, which alleged that fees charged for classes and extracurricular activities violate the California Constitution, this bill would have prohibited required student fees but permitted voluntary donations and fund raising. It mandated specific complaint procedures and withheld funding from school districts that failed to comply. "This goes too far," the governor stated in his veto message.

AB 47 (Huffman) Open enrollment

PTA Position: Support.

This bill would have modified last year's Open Enrollment Act, which allows students in low-performing schools to apply to other schools. It changed the number of schools that must be identified as low-performing and changed the criteria for that designation. Governor Brown said under the revised criteria only 150 schools would be included on the low-performing list. "I believe that the proposed changes go too far and would undermine the intent of the original law," he wrote.

SB 547 (Steinberg) Performance accountability

PTA Position: Watch.

This bill would have replaced the Academic Performance Index (API) with a new school and district performance measure called the Education Quality Index (EQI). The EQI would include data on graduation rates, college preparedness and career readiness, and would have gone into effect for the 2014-15 school year. In a lengthy veto message, the governor called this bill "yet another siren song of school reform" and wrote, "Adding more speedometers to a broken car won't turn it into a high performance machine." He said the new criteria were ill-defined and would result in significant costs and confusion.

Thank You

to the more than 50 PTA members who attended the fall Advocacy Training Roundtable!

Every member who becomes informed and actively involved adds to the strength of our voice on behalf of children!