

Fourth District Legislative Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT ADVOCACY TEAM

OCTOBER 2009

Governor signs bills to vie for “Race to the Top” federal stimulus funds

Governor Schwarzenegger signed three bills this month with an eye towards increasing California’s eligibility in securing *Race to the Top* grant funds for education.

Race to the Top is a federal competitive grant program that will provide over \$4.3 billion to states with plans to enact reform in the areas of increasing teacher and principal effectiveness; establishing data systems and using data for improvement; adopting rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments; and turning around the lowest-performing schools.

The governor signed SB19 (supported by California State PTA) to remove the prohibition against using data from the California Education Information System for purposes of pay, promotion, sanction, or evaluation of teachers. This allows the state to link personnel evaluations with student achievement data.

Schwarzenegger also signed AB1130, which establishes a method for using the Academic Performance Index (API student test scores) to hold schools accountable for the academic growth of individual students, tracked over time.

CAPTA advocates for children, sees supported legislation signed into law

California State PTA legislative advocates were pleased to see numerous PTA-supported bills signed into law this month.

Foster care youth – Legislation designed to help young people who are transitioning out of the foster care system will help foster youth by assuring that coursework requirements for high school graduation can be met while the student remains eligible for benefits; that they may receive food stamps for one year after turning 18; and that they receive priority status for housing at California public colleges and universities.

Children’s Health Issues – PTA supported bills that will be important to the health of children and youth, including increasing fines and penalties for buses idling

(continued →)

Calendar of Events

Special Guest Speaker:

Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff to Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, will discuss the latest news from Sacramento on government reform efforts, upcoming major education bills, the state budget outlook, Race to the Top funds for California, and what is really happening in the 5th extraordinary legislative session:

Friday, November 6, 10:30 a.m. – noon

Capistrano USD Education Center Board Room
33122 Valle Rd., San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675

Advocacy Roundtables:

Fridays, 9:30-11:00 a.m., OC Dept. of Ed., Bldg. D

- January 22
- April 16
- May 28

State PTA Legislation Conference:

February 21-22, Sacramento

EdSource Forum:

Friday, March 19, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., Santa Clara Marriott

Sacramento Safari:

- Monday, March 22 – Tuesday, March 23
- Orientation: Friday, February 26

Election Days:

- November 3, 2009
- June 8, 2010 – Primary

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Got children?

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Sacramento Safari

March 22-23, 2010

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near schools to control toxic air contaminants; and for the California Department of Public Health to develop and disseminate information to parents concerning meningococcal disease, which can cause meningitis.

Community Concerns – To improve the safety of children and youth, PTA supported bills that now make it a misdemeanor to have razor blades or box cutters on school grounds, or provide containers of nitrous oxide to anyone less than 18 years of age.

Field Poll shows California voters unsatisfied with governance

The results of a recent Field Poll revealed that approval ratings for Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the California State Legislature have hit new lows, at 27% and 13%, respectively.

When The Field Poll asked voters what should be done to fix the constant state of political crisis in the state, results included the following:

- Most voters – 51% – believe the state constitution is in need of fundamental change.
- When it comes to revising the constitution, voters prefer holding a constitutional convention to leaving the task to a commission by a 51% to 39% margin.
- Voters oppose lowering the 2/3 vote requirement for passing the state budget by a margin of 52% to 43%.
- Prop 13 changes to allow the Legislature to increase taxes with a majority vote are opposed by 69% of voters.
- Fifty-one percent of voters think term limits have helped state government, while 38% think they've hurt the process.
- Raising the bar for passing constitutional amendments on the ballot from a simple majority to two-thirds is favored by 56% of voters.
- Calling a special legislative session to address water supply issues was favored by 73% of respondents; a special session to address tax reform issues was favored by 62%.

California leads nation in firearm deaths among children and teens

A report released by the Children's Defense Fund showed that nationally, after a decade of decline prior to 2005, the number of firearm deaths among children and teens increased for the second year in a row.

California had more shooting deaths of children than any other state in the nation, with 511 gun deaths of children in 2006, up from 474 in 2005. More children died from firearm deaths in California in 2006 than in New York, Texas, and Arizona combined.

The annual report, *Protect Children, Not Guns*, was produced in conjunction with the latest data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Between 1994 and 2004, the annual number of firearm deaths of children and teens decreased by more than 50%. Data for 2006 show that 3,184 children and teens died from gunfire in the U.S. – 61 kids every week.

Ask the Advocacy Team

If you have any questions concerning advocacy issues, please contact us at: advocacy@fourthdistrictpta.org.

Key PTA Links

www.fourthdistrictpta.org – Click on **Advocacy**

www.capta.org – Select from menu: **Programs and Services: Advocacy** and **Children's Issues: Legislation**

www.pta.org – Click on **Take Action**

Reform efforts led by three groups

Governance reform for California is receiving widespread attention by a variety of voters, community leaders, advocacy organizations, and interest groups. These three groups are hoping to lead the charge:

California Forward: The California Forward reform plan will bring forward ballot measures which would deal with reforming the way the state is governed. CA Forward and their constituents would work out the needed reforms, and the electorate would vote yes or no.

Repair California: Repair California will bring forward two ballot measures which, if passed, will create a Constitutional Convention, allowing the citizens to reform our constitution. The constitutional convention delegates would decide upon the reforms, and then go to the voters for approval.

Special Committee on Reform: The Governor's appointed special committee would present legislative bills to reform governance. The legislature and the governor would ultimately decide upon the reform.

At the most recent Fourth District PTA Advocacy Roundtable, members heard a presentation about plans for a California Constitutional Convention by Matt Reagan, Director of Government Relations for the Bay Area Council – the group who initiated the movement, and the force behind Repair California.

A constitutional convention is a gathering of delegates for the purpose of revising an existing constitution or writing a new one. Many states hold these on a regular basis, but California has not done so since 1879. Subsequent amendments (some in conflict with each other) have resulted in California's constitution being among the longest in the world.

Passage of two ballot initiatives would enable a constitutional convention to be called. The first would allow voters to call a constitutional convention; the second would actually call for the constitutional convention itself.

County delegates would then address all aspects of governance in one overall sweeping reform effort, to be approved by voters. The entire process is expected to take less than two years, and cost less than four typical, single-issue, state ballot initiatives.