

Fourth District Legislative Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT ADVOCACY TEAM

JUNE 2011

Keep it going this summer...

By Patty Christiansen, Fourth District PTA VP, Advocacy
(Excerpts from Fourth District PTA's *Orange Leaves*)

While PTA leaders and members take a break from PTA volunteering and school work, the state government is in full swing. Your legislators will be busy in budget discussions and in floor debates on legislative bills. When the final budget vote is taken, will PTA members be communicating with their legislators about their opposition to budget cuts to education funding? Keep in mind that this is also "crunch time" for school districts, which have until the end of June to pass their budgets, whether or not the state funding picture is clear.

PTA advocacy does not take a summer vacation. What can we do to solve this dilemma?

► **Add advocacy to your summer plans.** When you plan vacations and weekend trips, add a trip to your legislator's local office. Take a child along with you, if he or she is old enough to understand the process and make a contribution. Make an appointment, plan what you will say, and take your child on a field trip to visit a legislator!



► **Remember that legislators take a vacation, too.** July 15 is the last day before summer recess, *if the budget has been enacted*. The legislature reconvenes in Sacramento on August 15.

► **Send a creative message!** Get the kids busy with artwork while you create a message to send to your legislator's office. Add your message to the bottom of

Calendar of Events

Prepare for next year:

Transition. If you are not returning as your unit or council Legislation & Advocacy Chairman next year, please be sure to pass along your information from this year to your successor. The CAPTA job description can be found in the online Toolkit (page 419) at capta.org, and additional local resources are available at fourthdistrictpta.org under the Advocacy tab.

Plan to go on Safari. Sacramento Safari takes place every March. When your incoming Executive Board is planning the 2011-12 budget, have them include a line item for this important event (about \$550) to ensure your group's participation.

your child's artwork, and send it to your legislator's office. If possible, fax the message – it will reach the office sooner since all regular mail to legislators must be inspected first. Your child's art will help your message stand out!

► **Put it in your cell phone.** Add your legislator's local office phone number to your cell phone book. When you are driving the kids here and there, take a minute at break points to make a phone call to remind your legislator to speak up for California's nine million children! If you don't know who your state legislators are, find names and contact information at www.easyvoter.org, sponsored by the League of Women Voters.

► **Keep in touch.** While we all deserve a break for the summer, checking your email and taking five minutes to contact a legislator or school board member are vital ways to continue to advocate for our kids. PTA leaders who are charged with forwarding email on advocacy issues need to be sure that this important task is not dropped in the summer. If you will be out of town, arrange for someone else to fill in. We can't afford to be silent during this crucial time. (See page 2 for how to sign up for email alerts.)

Advocacy does not take a vacation. Keep your advocacy efforts going through the summer. Keep the pressure on our elected officials to do the right things for our kids.

*The “May Revise”***Budget recoups \$3 billion for education**

Governor Jerry Brown's revised state budget (the “May Revise”) plans to give \$3 billion more to schools next year than it is getting this year and avoids a suspension of California's Proposition 98, but still falls short of restoring what education should receive through Prop 98 guarantees over the long term. It also remains too soon for most school districts to confidently rescind layoff notices.

Brown expects that California will take in \$6.6 billion more in tax revenue over the next 13 months than estimated earlier, but reiterated the need to extend tax increases to avoid deep budget deficits in future years. The revised budget proposal predicts a deficit of \$9.6 billion through June 30, 2012. The plan would eliminate 5,500 state jobs and 43 boards and commissions.

As in Brown's January budget, he continues his call for voters to extend the 1% in sales taxes and 0.5% in vehicle license fees for another five years; they are currently set to decrease after June. But he is now asking that the 0.25 income tax surcharge be delayed until 2012 (lasting until 2015), reflecting both the state's income tax surge this fiscal year as well as political considerations.

California State PTA President Jo A.S. Loss issued the following statement in response to the Governor's release of the May Revision of the state budget:

"Parents and PTAs across the state have spoken up loudly about the critical need for the state to adequately invest in educating all of our children. The Governor's May Revise acknowledges the importance of stemming the tidal wave of budget cuts that our children and schools have already suffered. The Governor's proposal continues to point the way to a balanced, responsible approach that includes cuts, plus an extension of some revenues.

"This is an important step in the process, but there is still much work to be done. We look forward to both Republicans and Democrats working together and negotiating a final budget plan that does not harm kids and supports California's future.

"PTA will continue to speak up throughout the state in support of this balanced approach to prevent deeper cuts."

While the May Revision helps to ameliorate the gloomy fiscal outlook for schools that have suffered more than \$18 billion in education cuts over the past three years, the Governor's proposal still must be approved by the Legislature, and the revenue portions require a two-thirds vote of both houses. If tax extensions are not approved, then the Prop 98 guarantee would automatically drop by \$2 billion, and the administration suggests that it

Keep in touch...

All PTA members are encouraged to stay informed and learn when to take action by subscribing to PTA's email alert systems.

National PTA

Subscribe to *Federal Policy Update and Action Alerts*. Go to www.pta.org and click on “Public Policy” to see a description of the program and sign up, as well as other advocacy tools available.

California State PTA

Subscribe to Legislative Alerts by going to www.capta.org and clicking on “Legislative Alerts” near the upper right corner of the page. On the “Legislative Alerts” page, click the dark blue button labeled “RECEIVE EMAIL UPDATES.”

Fourth District PTA

Subscribe to our Leg-Link service by going to www.fourthdistrictpta.org and clicking on the turquoise “Join our Advocacy e-mail list, Leg Link” button toward the bottom left of the home page. All members are welcome to participate!

would be necessary to suspend Prop 98 and cut as much as an additional \$3 billion, for a total reduction of about \$5 billion.

Basic Aid Districts: Money is going

The May Revision removes the \$2.1 billion deferral that had been proposed in the January budget, and also buys down \$400 million of previous deferrals. (The \$2.1 billion deferral will be reinstated if the tax extensions are not successful.) For Basic Aid districts, the Governor's choice of using funds to reduce deferrals, rather than revenue limit or categorical deficits, means Basic Aid districts will continue their “fair share” reductions and will not participate in deferral relief because they have not been subject to the same type or level of deferrals as equalization aid districts. (Districts financed in large part through community funding had less money deferred than districts relying entirely on the state.)

The Governor's May Revision proposal does not provide for any operational funding increases in a manner that starts restoring prior programmatic cuts, nor does it address the fiscal pressures caused by declining enrollment, increased health care costs, and step-and-column requirements for payroll increases. These fiscal pressures will continue to require schools to make reductions even if the May Revision were to be 100% accurate and implemented.