

Talking Points for Legislative Chairs, May 2014

Details are in the May issue of the *Advocacy Communicator*.

- Dismissal of teachers for egregious behavior is a hot topic in California right now. Two bills dealing with this topic, AB 215 and SB 843, are working their way through the legislature. The two bills are pretty similar. Both would streamline the dismissal process in various ways. California State PTA has taken a “watch” position on both bills, and is waiting for legislators to do more work on them.
- State PTA is also watching SB 1185, which would protect specialized teachers in career pathway programs from layoffs. Career pathway programs are designed to help students transition from school into the workforce.
- Vergara v. California is a lawsuit that deals with teacher layoffs. The lawsuit claims that practices such as “last in first out” (laying off newest teachers first) and the difficult process for dismissing unsuitable teachers are responsible for the achievement gap and are especially harmful to students in low income areas. Final arguments were presented in court in April and the judge is expected to issue a ruling in the next few months.
- An initiative called **Stop Child Molesters, Sexual Abusers and Drug Dealers from Working in California Schools Act** is being circulated for signatures. It would speed up the dismissal process for teachers accused of egregious behavior with provisions that are similar to AB 215 and SB 843. California State PTA has not taken a position on this initiative.
- A lot of school districts have postponed maintenance projects during the past several years so they could maintain educational programs. Under the new Local Control Funding Formula school districts can use state funding to upgrade and repair school facilities as long as they show how it will benefit goals for high-needs students.
- Another current hot topic is early childhood education. California State PTA is supporting SB 837, which would establish Transitional Kindergarten for all four-year-olds in the state. At the federal level, National PTA supports the Strong Start for Children Act, which would provide grants to states for high-quality preschool programs.
- California State PTA has a careful process for deciding what bills to support or oppose. Positions are based in part on legislative planks and resolutions that are approved by PTA members at state conventions. To find out more about the process and what positions PTA has taken on bills, go to www.capta.org.

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