

# Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

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## Good news and bad news in Gov. Brown's proposed State Budget

Governor Jerry Brown's proposed budget for 2015-16 includes substantial increases for education. Prop. 98 funding for K-12 and community colleges would go up by \$7.9 billion, a 12 percent increase.

Gov. Brown's plan would allocate about \$4 billion to the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula, the state's new school funding system. Another \$1 billion would pay off school districts and community col-

### Showdown over state funding for school construction

A showdown is brewing between Gov. Brown and a coalition of education supporters over whether the state should continue to provide funding for school construction.

The state has run out of bond money for school construction. Last year state legislators dropped a proposed bond when the Governor indicated he would veto it. Brown reiterated his reasons for opposing the state school construction program in his proposed budget for 2015-16. He says the system is overly complex, cumbersome and costly, and encourages districts to build more facilities than they need, among other criticisms.

The Governor wants districts to pay for school construction on their own. The state would assist them, he proposes, by increasing the amount of bonded indebtedness a district is allowed to carry, allowing districts to use maintenance funding for building projects, and increasing and standardizing developer fees.

California's Coalition for Adequate School Housing, an organization of 350 school districts and construction industry representatives, is taking matters into its own hands by launching a \$9 billion school bond initiative.

"Every child is entitled to quality facilities, and there must be a state role to ensure there is equity," said Joe Dixon, coalition chairman and assistant superintendent of Santa Ana Unified School District.

In a third corner, Assemblyman Chris Holden plans to propose a \$1.1 billion bond for the 2016 ballot to deal with projects that are already in line for state funding. After addressing immediate needs, he said, he would work with the governor on an alternative funding system.

leges for Prop. 98 funding that was deferred during the recession.

Other proposed expenditures include:

- \$1.1 billion to implement Common Core standards.
- \$500 million for adult education programs.
- \$250 million for grants to support career and technical education programs.
- \$100 million for Internet connectivity and infrastructure in schools.

While the funding increases are good news, school districts would effectively have less of the increased funding to spend on education programs due to Gov. Brown's plan to eliminate the \$74 billion unfunded liability in the state's retirement system for teachers and other public employees. Starting this school year, the state, school districts and individual teachers must contribute to the system. The amount each of those contributes will go up every year for the next five years.

This year, school districts will contribute 8.25 percent of their payroll, going up to 19.1 percent by 2020-21. If funding levels increase as expected, school districts will pay \$4.4 billion for retirement costs in 2020-21.

Much of the increased funding for education is required by the complicated formulas of Prop. 98. In addition, Gov. Brown said that because education took the bulk of budget cuts during the recession schools should get a bigger cut of the recovery. Under his budget, most non-Prop. 98 funding will go into the state's new rainy day fund as required by Prop. 2, passed by the voters in November. This would leave little funding for health and social programs that benefit children.

The proposed budget would still leave California in 46th place in per pupil funding nationwide.

### Last chance to register for Sacramento Safari!

Registration deadline:

February 27

Register today at

[www.fourthdistrictpta.org](http://www.fourthdistrictpta.org)

## Reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB may be accomplished this year

After years of failed attempts, Congress may finally reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year. Leaders of the Senate and House education committees have stated that they intend to have a revised version on the President's desk by this summer.

The current law, titled No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was due for reauthorization in 2007.

The original ESEA was enacted in 1965 and was renewed about every five years. The NCLB version, passed in 2002, has been praised for promoting high standards and requiring schools to address the achievement gap between affluent children and those from lower income and minority backgrounds. It has been criticized for mandating 17 annual standardized tests, setting unachievable goals and establishing punitive measures for schools that fail to meet those goals.

As the ESEA is reconsidered by Congress, controversies are likely to center on accountability, testing requirements, teacher evaluations and whether those are based on test results, and the allocation of federal education dollars. (In California, federal funding accounts for about 14 percent of the total state education budget.)

Some members of Congress, on the other hand, would prefer to reduce the role of the federal government in education.

National PTA President Otha Thornton urged Congress to act.

"Reauthorization of the ESEA/NCLB has long been a key public policy priority of National PTA," he said. "The association urges Congress to take swift action to address needed changes to the law to improve education for all students and ensure every child has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential."

## PTA joins national effort to invest in early learning programs

National PTA has joined *Invest in US*, a national campaign launched by President Barak Obama to increase investments in high-quality early learning programs for children from birth to age five.

"The education of our nation's children must begin long before they enter school as research shows that providing effective, targeted supports and interventions to children and parents starting at birth will better prepare them for academic and career success," said Otha Thornton, National PTA president. "For decades, National PTA has called for the prioritization of early childhood education, and the association is pleased to support the *Invest in US* initiative to ensure that every child has access to high-quality early learning programs."

National PTA joins other nonprofit associations, corporations and foundations in pledging support and commitments to the initiative and working collaboratively to make sure more communities have high-quality early childhood programs. *Invest in US* commitments are intended to:

- Strengthen public systems at the federal, state and local levels to ensure continuous quality improvements in parental education, home visiting, Early Head Start, quality child care, Head Start and pre-

school programs;

- Integrate health and developmental screenings with early learning to provide parents with the information they need to optimize their child's physical, emotional and intellectual development;
- Improve the training, continuing education, professional development and living wages of early childhood educators;
- Support greater access to evidence-based programs that support parents and families in fostering their children's development; and
- Promote and share ongoing program innovation and improvement, especially for those programs supporting parents and informal caregivers.

National PTA believes early childhood programs should be affordable and accessible; developmentally appropriate; coordinated at all levels (federal, state and local); and characterized by high standards for teaching, training, health and safety. The association also encourages the inclusion of a strong family engagement component in all programs.

For more information about the Invest in US initiative, visit [investinus.org](http://investinus.org).

