

# Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

MARCH 2016

## Sacramento Safari participants hear about a variety of school issues

The state's new accountability system, preschool for all children, and school funding were among the hot topics that were discussed during this year's Sacramento Safari.

Seventy-five PTA moms and dads from throughout Orange County participated in the two-day event. They heard from 15 education experts, including the vice president of the State Board of Education, the Secretary of State, the president of the California Teachers Association, and the President Pro Tem of the State Senate.

On the second day, small groups of parents had productive meetings with 12 legislators or their staff members in their Capitol offices.

Several of the speakers noted that the State Board of Education is developing the state's new school accountability system from the ground up in a careful and transparent manner.

"We are taking our time and trying to be patient, persistent and humble, because it's really big work," said Dr. Ilene Strauss, vice president of the state board.

Under the new accountability system a "dash board" of multiple measures will replace the single API number. Instead of labelling and punishing schools that are not meeting achievement goals, there will be measures to support schools and help them improve.

The result will be one coherent system that works for California and fits with the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the recently-enacted successor to No Child Left Behind.

Providing early childhood education for all children is a top priority for both Kevin de León, the State Senate President Pro Tem, and Anthony Rendon, who becomes Speaker of the Assembly on March 7. Only 15 percent of low-income children are in a quality preschool and many enter Kindergarten with no skills, said Ted Lempert, president of Children Now. All children should start school on the same footing, and then the sky's the limit, said Senator Janet Nguyen.

A \$9 billion school construction bond that has qualified for the November 2016 election and an attempt to extend the Prop 30 tax increase on high earners, which provided additional funding for education, were on the minds of many of the Safari speakers. There are concerns that if both are on the November ballot, neither one will pass. There was still a possibility to place a smaller school facilities bond on the June ballot instead. Governor Brown, meanwhile, wants to revamp the entire system for funding school construction and renovation.

Safari participants heard opposing viewpoints regarding the cap on school district reserves. Paul Richman, from the California School Boards Association, said the cap could impact a district's credit rating, resulting in higher interest costs for bonds and major projects. Rick Simpson, on the other hand, said that there is little chance the cap will be triggered and that there are easy ways for school districts to circumvent it.

A full report on Sacramento Safari highlights can be found at [www.fourthdistrictpta.org](http://www.fourthdistrictpta.org).



Fourth District PTA parents and Secretary of State Alex Padilla (front row, center) in a committee hearing room in the State Capitol

## Countywide project encouraging seniors to vote launches at LBHS

A countywide endeavor to encourage high school seniors to register to vote had a highly-successful launch at Laguna Beach High School in February.

The project was initiated by Fourth District PTA, in cooperation with the Orange County Department of Education and the Orange County Registrar of Voters.

“Our focus this year is civic engagement,” said Fourth District PTA Vice President of Advocacy Kathleen Fay, who also serves as Laguna Beach PTA Council Advocate. “In order to provide leadership and guidance to all PTA units, we are happy to pilot this project at our local high school.”

Voter registration packets were distributed to seniors in government classes. The packets included a voter registration form to be sent via mail, a voter registration slip with a QR code that can be scanned by a smartphone to register electronically, “When You Turn 18: A Survival Guide for Teenagers” (a publication by the State Bar of California), and a cover letter signed by Fourth District PTA President Bev Berryman, Orange County Superintendent Dr. Al Mijares, and Orange County Registrar of Voters Neal Kelley.

The students learned that in California they can register to vote at age 17 if they will be 18 by the next election.

“My students were pretty excited,” said government teacher Mark Alvarez. “I think the privileges that come with being 18 are just sinking in!”

At a subsequent Laguna Beach High School PTA meeting, Kathleen was told that students went home and talked about registering to vote. One parent used the packet to register himself to vote for the first time.

“Now that’s a nice unintended consequence!” said Kathleen.

To find out how your PTA can sponsor a voter registration drive in your high school, contact Kathleen at [advocacy@fourthdistrictpta.org](mailto:advocacy@fourthdistrictpta.org)



Do you think your vote doesn't count?

Senator Janet Nguyen won a previous election by

**3 votes.**



## Report shows California schools are still severely underfunded

California underfunds its schools by as much as \$42 billion annually, according to a new report by the California School Boards Association (CSBA).

“By nearly every measure, be it funding, staffing, or infrastructure, we’re lagging behind other states and countries in terms of the support we provide our students,” said CSBA President Chris Ungar in a press release.

Some facts from the report:

- California ranks 10<sup>th</sup> among states in per capita income, but 40<sup>th</sup> in per student funding.
- Californians spend 2.7 percent of taxable income on K-12 education as compared to 3.4 percent nationally.
- The state would need \$15 billion more per year just to meet the national average in education funding.
- Californians rank 49<sup>th</sup> in the ratio of students per teacher. We would need 110,000 additional teachers to be at the national average.
- The state would need \$22 billion to \$42 billion in additional resources to provide students with an adequate education.

Even the improving economy and the increases in school funding during the past several years have not come close to providing schools with the support they need, the report states. At the same time, California schools are facing new challenges, including the implementation of new California State Standards, new priorities under the Local Control Funding Formula, higher contributions to the employee retirement system, costs to acquire and implement classroom technology, and growing special education costs.

Higher investment in education would result in better jobs, lower unemployment, lower participation in welfare, reduced rates of incarceration and greater competitiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy, according to the report.

The report is available at [www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org).



Save the Date

Fourth District PTA



Advocacy Forum

Friday, April 22

9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Fountain Valley School District  
10055 Slater Avenue, Fountain Valley

Program to be announced

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