

Talking Points for Legislative Chairs, May 2016

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

Teacher shortage!

- California has a serious teacher shortage! There were almost 4,000 open teaching positions statewide at the beginning of this school year. Fewer people want to be teachers. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped 75 percent in the last 10 years.
- Lawmakers in Sacramento have introduced several bills to address this problem. Five of them are supported by California State PTA. They are listed in the May issue of the *Communicator*.

Advocacy Forum recap

- Assemblyman Rocky Chavez was the guest speaker at the Advocacy Forum in April. He had some interesting things to say. He thinks parent involvement is vitally important to a child's education and he supports the \$9 billion bond for school facilities. He also said that call-in campaigns by parents do influence the decision of legislators. That is good to know!

Court cases address education issues

- Three big court cases dealing with education have been working their way through the courts. There were rulings on all three in the past couple of months, but that is not the end of the story for any of them
- Robles-Wong v California is trying to prove that the inadequate funding for schools is depriving students of a good education and that this violates the California Constitution's mandate to provide an education for all children. A Superior Court and an Appeals Court have ruled that the Constitution does not require a specific level of funding. The case is being appealed to the state Supreme Court. California State PTA is one of the plaintiffs in this case.
- Vergara v California claims that state laws that provide job protections for teachers are to blame for the achievement gap and violate the rights of students, especially low income students. A Superior Court judge agreed, but an Appeals Court disagreed. That case is going to the state Supreme Court as well.
- Friedrichs v. CTA challenged the requirement that teachers pay fees to their local union to help pay for bargaining costs, even if they are not members of the union and do not agree with the union's lobbying efforts. The case was heard in the U.S. Supreme Court. Because Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia died suddenly, the ruling was 4-4, which meant the lower court decision upholding the agency fees remains in effect. The case may be brought back to the Supreme Court when a new justice is appointed. Similar legal challenges are working their way through the courts in other states.

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