

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

JANUARY 2019

You can advocate for children with an email or a phone call

There are 120 lawmakers in the California Legislature: 40 in the Senate and 80 in the Assembly. As they introduce, consider, discuss, and vote on hundreds of bills each year, the legislators get input from about 2,000 registered lobbyists representing California cities, counties, businesses, and organizations. Most of those lobbyists are paid.

In the midst of that throng are five volunteer advocates representing California State PTA, including one from Orange County: Donna Artukovic. These advocates work diligently to persuade legislators to pass laws that benefit children and public schools. (To learn how State PTA takes positions on bills go to toolkit.capta.org/advocacy/.)

Needless to say, the five advocates have a huge job to do, with few resources. One of their most important resources is YOU, the PTA member.

You can play a role in making sure that laws supporting the welfare of children are passed. You can do this by contacting your legislators whenever you get an action alert from Fourth District PTA or CAPTA.

In most cases, this can be done easily and quickly by sending an email to your state senator or assembly member or by making a quick phone call to his or her Sacramento office.

You don't need to talk to the legislator. Simply tell the staff person who answers the phone: "Hi, I'm Jane Doe and I live in the senator's/Assembly member's district. I would like him/her to vote yes/no on AB 999." The staffer may ask for your address to verify that you are a constituent. The phone call shouldn't take more than a minute.

Staffers tabulate the information they get from phone calls. "Burning up the phones" with an organized campaign can definitely influence the voting decisions of legislators, according to a former Assembly member who spoke at one of our Advocacy Forums.

To sign up for legislative action alerts go to www.fourthdistrictpta.org and click on Advocacy/Legislative Alerts & News.

It's a good idea to know in advance the names of your senator and Assembly member and how to contact them. Include their email addresses in your email address list. Program their phone numbers in your cell phone. That way you can respond quickly when action is needed.

To find out the names of your legislators, go to <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>.

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Forum



Dropping enrollments, rising costs, inadequate funding.

A panel of Orange County school superintendents will talk about how our school districts are dealing with these challenges.

Friday, January 25
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Fountain Valley School District
10055 Slater Ave., Fountain Valley

Free and open to all PTA members.

CAPTA Advocacy Conference Call

The next California State PTA advocacy conference call is scheduled for Monday, January 28, at 7 p.m.

Call-in Directions:

- Conference Dial-In Number: 1 (641) 715-3276
- Participant Access Code: 604265#
- To mute or unmute during the session, press *6.

Registration closes January 26!

Sacramento Safari

February 25 and 26

Register today at:
www.fourthdistrictpta.org



Sacramento Safari Orientation Meeting

Friday, February 8
9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Fountain Valley School District
10055 Slater Avenue, Fountain Valley
**Everything you need to know
for a productive Sacramento Safari.**

National PTA applauds Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018

In December, the President signed the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018, which will reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA) and strengthen the nation's juvenile justice system.

The JJJPA was originally signed into law in 1974 and had been due for reauthorization since 2007.

"This bill includes provisions that will continue and strengthen protections for children and youth currently in the juvenile justice system, and promote alternatives to incarceration for youths charged with crimes," said Jim Accomando, president of National PTA. "National PTA applauds Congress' bipartisan effort to ensure families and communities are involved in safeguarding all of our nation's youth."

The Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 will improve current law by:

- Supporting a continuum of evidence-based programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk youth who are involved with the justice system, including engaging family members, where appropriate, in the design and delivery of juvenile delinquency prevention.
- Continuing the separation of detained youth and adults awaiting trial.
- Continuing to ensure that detained children receive education and have a smooth transition back into the classroom after release.
- Encouraging states to use data and implement strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities among youth in the juvenile justice system.

National PTA was disappointed that the revised law did not phase out exemptions that allow students to be detained for minor offenses such as skipping school. Eliminating this exemption is a key priority for PTA.

PTA disappointed by some parts of federal report on school safety

A federal report on school safety, released in December after eight months of public input and field visits, was met with disappointment and criticism from some members of the education community.

The commission, led by U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, was convened by President Donald Trump after the February massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas School in which 17 students and staff members were killed.

According to National PTA, the report offers several recommendations aligned with PTA positions on improved access to school-based mental and behavioral health services, threat assessments protocols, comprehensive school safety plans, and the role of school resource officers.

However, PTA was disappointed that the report recommends rescinding Obama-era guidelines calling for alternatives to suspensions and expulsions. Data shows that students of color and those with disabilities are three times as likely to face these punishments.

While the federal commission pointed to evidence-based frameworks to support and implement behavioral, health and mental health services, the report does not include a recommendation to increase the staffing ratios of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses who can provide those supports, according to the National PTA response.

The federal report also encourages coordination between schools and law enforcement that could include programs that arm "highly trained school employees." PTA would have preferred common sense proposals to

limit youth access to firearms, strengthen background checks, fund gun violence research efforts, and ban assault weapons. PTA believes any effort to improve the safety of our nation's youth must be comprehensive and include gun safety and violence prevention measures.

"While the Commission's report does not explicitly recommend arming educators, National PTA believes the most effective day-to-day school climate is a gun-free campus—which includes not arming teachers and administrators," said Jim Accomando, president of National PTA. "Teachers and administrators should be able to focus on their primary responsibility, which is to educate our children. Our association opposes any attempt to use federal funds to arm or provide firearm training for educators."

The report will have little impact on California education policies. California already has some of the strictest gun laws in the country and a new law going into effect this month prohibits anyone under the age of 21 from purchasing a firearm, unless he or she is in the military or law enforcement. California has banned "defiance and disruption" suspensions in grades K through 3, leading to a significant drop in the number of suspended students.

"We look forward to working with the Commission, the administration, Congress, and state and local policy makers to shape policies based on evidenced-based best practices in school safety and climate, discipline, student mental health, instructional leadership, teaching and learning" said Nathan Monell, executive director of National PTA.