

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

DECEMBER 2014

New two-year legislative session begins in December

December 1 marks the beginning of a new two-year legislative session for California. Both the Senate and Assembly organize, elect officers and adopt rules for the upcoming session in December.

In the first year of the session, lawmakers meet from the first Monday in January to mid-September and then recess until the following January. During the second year the legislature meets from the first week in January until November 30 of the next even-numbered year, when the session is adjourned.

When a bill is introduced in the Assembly or Senate, it must be approved by several committees in that house before a debate and vote by the entire house of origin. The bill then goes to the other house, where it again goes through a committee process before a debate and vote by that house.

If the second house amends the bill and members of the first house do not concur with those changes, a confer-

ence committee of three Senators and three Assembly Members meets to iron out the differences. The new version must be approved by both the Senate and Assembly before being sent to the Governor.

The Governor can sign the bill into law or do nothing, which also enacts the bill into law. If the Governor vetoes a bill, the legislature has 60 days to override that veto with a two-thirds vote of both the Senate and Assembly.

Important legislative dates for 2015:

Jan. 5—Lawmakers reconvene to begin legislative work.

Jan. 10—Governor must submit a proposed State Budget

March 26 to April 6—Spring recess

Feb. 27—Last day to introduce a bill

June 5—Last day to pass a bill out the house of origin

June 15—State budget bill must be passed by midnight

July 17 to Aug. 16—Summer recess.

Sept. 11—All bills must be out of the Legislature and sent to the Governor

OCDE Board of Trustees holds second hearing on Common Core

About 300 people attended the second of two public hearings on Common Core State Standards (CCSS) held by the Board of Trustees of the Orange County Department of Education Board on November 17.

A different set of speakers was invited to this event, with four speaking in favor of the standards and four speaking in opposition.

Comments in support of CCSS included:

- CCSS teach children critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and other skills they will need for jobs of the future.
- The standards are a list of expectations for what children should know, understand, and be able to do. The standards are not assessments or curriculum.
- The process of writing the standards was open and transparent and included about 10,000 comments from the public, some of which resulted in changes.
- California institutions of higher education and many major businesses enthusiastically support CCSS.

A transcript and audio recording of the October 20 Common Core public hearing are available at www.ocde.us under Board/Special Board Meetings. A transcript of the November meeting will also be posted.

- The CCSS math standards will create a world where children will know, use and enjoy math
- Many 21st Century jobs, including those that do not require a college degree, require training in STEM subjects. The new standards will meet that need.

The comments against CCSS included:

- CCSS are developmentally inappropriate, unrealistic and psychologically manipulative.
- New assessments will result in data mining on individual students by the federal government.
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation had undue influence on the development of the standards.
- The CCSS math homework is destroying family time because students are being told to solve problems “15 ways to Sunday.”
- The standards were not internationally benchmarked.
- California should drop CCSS and go back to the previous set of standards.

Roundtable presents a bipartisan discussion of education issues

Local control, Common Core State Standards, school facilities funding and statewide tests were among the topics discussed by Rick Simpson and Assemblyman Don Wagner at the November Advocacy Roundtable.

Simpson is the Deputy Chief of Staff to Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins (Democrat) and Wagner (Republican) represents the 70th Assembly District.

Much of the conversation revolved around “devolving” power from Sacramento to school districts. Prior to 1978, school boards had the ability to raise local taxes and make decisions for their school districts. After the passage of Prop. 13 funding and decision-making for schools shifted to the state. Both Wagner and Simpson would like to see local control returned to school districts.

Wagner said that school districts would be more responsive and flexible in dealing with local situations. Simpson said that the additional funding needed by schools is not likely to come from federal or state sources, so he would subscribe to devolving taxing power back to the local level. Wagner said lawmakers on his side of the aisle would agree as long as the taxation power comes with local control.

When asked if this would create funding inequities among school districts, Simpson said there are various ways to address that, such as setting the tax at a county level, creating a special district for the purposes of taxation, allowing districts to choose the type of tax (income, sales, excise, parcel) that works best for them, or having the state contribute funding to equalize taxing efforts.

Other main points:

- The state’s fund for school facilities is empty and the governor is opposed to another state school bond, which means there may be no future state funding for facilities. Simpson said as a last resort school districts could use developer fees to fund facilities.
- What will happen when the education funding under Prop 30 expires in five years? Wagner said there will be pressure to extend the tax increase, but it could go

either way. Simpson predicted the legislature will not vote to extend the tax but that it may be put to voters to decide as a ballot initiative.

- Both speakers said there should be a re-examination of the state testing system. Simpson said some tests, such as the High School Exit Exam, could be eliminated. Current tests focus too much on English and math, he said. Wagner agreed that changes are needed but remarked that getting 120 lawmakers to tackle such a complex issue is a “daunting challenge.”
- Simpson said he and most of the policy and political leadership support the Common Core State Standards. He thinks most of the anxiety is about testing and teacher preparation. Wagner said many moderate conservatives see Common Core as another federal program that is doomed to failure. While he is not a fan of the standards, he said they are “the law of the land” and that he will do what he can to see they are implemented well.

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New faces among OC lawmakers

The General Election in November resulted in several changes in Orange County legislative districts.

State Senate

32nd District: Mario Guerra replaced Norma Torres.

34th District: Janet Nguyen replaced Lou Correa.

37th District: Mimi Walters was elected to Congress. A special election will be required to fill the Senate seat.

Senators Bob Huff (29th District) and Mark Wyland (38th District) were not up for election this year.

State Assembly

55th District: Ling-Ling Chang replaced Curt Hagman.

65th District: Young Kim replaced Sharon Quirk-Silva.

73rd District: William Brough replaced Diane Harkey.

74th District: Matthew Harper replaced Allen Mansoor.

Assembly Members Donald P. Wagner (68th District), Tom Daly (69th District) and Travis Allen (72nd District) were re-elected.

Upcoming Advocacy Roundtables

Friday, January 23 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Friday, April 24 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Programs to be announced.

Fountain Valley School District, Board Room
10055 Slater Avenue, Fountain Valley, 92708

All PTA members are welcome to attend.

*The Advocacy Communicator is published by the Fourth District PTA Advocacy Team and is intended for distribution to local PTA units and councils. Maureen Christensen—President; Shereen Walter—Vice President, Advocacy; Gisela Meier—Editor.
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