

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

MARCH 2024

Governor's budget concerns Sacramento Safari speakers

The huge state budget deficit and how it might impact California schools was on the minds of many of our speakers at Sacramento Safari.

Governor Newsom has projected a \$30 billion deficit but the Legislative Analyst's Office says the number is closer to \$58 billion. In light of tax revenues that came in during January, that number could go as high as \$73 billion.

The governor has proposed a novel approach to the problem. He would delay recognizing \$8 billion in payments that were made to school districts and community colleges during the 2022-23 fiscal year, even though that money has already been disbursed and school districts would be allowed to keep it. The state would recognize this expenditure over a five-year period, beginning in 2025-26.

The governor would also withdraw about \$5.7 billion from the education rainy-day fund. Per-pupil funding would decrease because of a statewide drop in school enrollment. Overall, school funding would be maintained close to current levels in the governor's plan.

Ken Kapphahn, from the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office, said the governor's estimates are too optimistic. He expressed concern that the \$8 billion budget maneuver means the state is effectively borrowing from future revenues by creating a new type of binding obligation

on itself. He said that it would contribute to future state deficits and would create a precedent for using maneuvers like this in the future.

Chris Reeve, a deputy director with the California School Boards Association, said the governor's plan would create a "no-interest credit card" and would lower the Prop. 98 funding guarantee forever.

Education expert Kevin Gordon, from Capitol Advisors, also expressed concern about the governor's plan. Since the requirements of Prop. 98 funding are based on the previous year's funding levels, eliminating \$8 billion from the previous year would reduce the base amount required for this year and all subsequent years. A future governor might use this same maneuver to cut education funding. "We don't want to hand our enemies a hammer for future years," Gordon said.

The governor's plan uses about half of the rainy day fund for education. Gordon is worried that with the additional drop in tax revenue all of the reserve fund will be used up, leaving nothing for future years.

The political reality is that there will have to be budget cuts when the updated revenue numbers are available in May, Gordon said. "Let's advocate for as few cuts as possible."

Read the LAO's latest report on the governor's proposal [here](#).

Fourth District PTA's messages to state legislators

Seventy-eight parents, principals, school board members, and one superintendent went to Sacramento to hear from education experts and meet in small groups with state legislators. Here are the three messages we brought to lawmakers:

Thank you for improving public education for our kids. We have noticed the improvements: California's per-pupil funding is at the national average. Early education gives kids a stronger start. Schools serving high-needs students are getting extra resources to help bridge the achievement gap. Post-pandemic recovery efforts have continued. We want you to know that we acknowledge and sincerely appreciate these accomplishments.

Mental health and safety issues remain challenging. Roughly half of our students report mental health concerns, so access to services remains critical. Hiring more

counselors has helped, but the ratio of counselors to students falls short. Safety concerns such as bullying, social media pressures, and fear of gun violence persist. Addressing these matters will involve special efforts to reestablish connections between students and schools and bolster engagement with their families, and we must protect students from those who would persecute them in hate and discrimination.

Please prioritize children and youth. When addressing California's anticipated budget shortfall, please prioritize the needs of children, youth, and families by sustaining those measures that help them the most and give them hope for the future. Safeguard their health, safety, welfare, culture, and well-being—especially those that are most vulnerable. And finally, please consider solutions that will eventually provide for the long-term stability of public education with less-volatile funding sources.

Sacramento Safari speakers discuss a variety of education issues

Here are some key points from our guest speakers at Sacramento Safari:

Shereen Walter, California State PTA President: PTA was founded not as a fund-raising group but as an advocacy organization to protect our children. “I see each of you as a powerhouse.” CAPTA exists to support local PTA groups. Lots of training is available at the CAPTA State Convention, May 3 to 5 in Ontario.

Josiah Kitonga, CAPTA’s new Managing Director: “I am extremely impressed by all of you because you’re all volunteers.” Email him if you need help with anything.

Kathleen Faye, CAPTA Director of Legislation: Kathleen reviewed CAPTA’s advocacy goals and described the impact of PTA through a number of PTA-supported bills that have been passed into law.

State Senator Anthony Portantino, 25th Senate District: The senator has authored bills to base school funding on enrollment rather than attendance, translate Individual Education Plans (IEPs), train school personnel to see warning signs for suicide, and provide fentanyl testing strips for students. “Make sure you have your state legislators’ phone numbers on your cell phone.”

Erin Jenks, CAPTA Arts Advocate: The arts are a vitally important part of educating the whole child. “Arts education bridges the gaps so everyone has a place to go and belong.” CreateCA.org has resources to help you bring arts education to your school.

Carol Kocivar: Ed100.org is a free website designed to help you be an informed education leader. There are chapters explaining every aspect of California’s education system, available in English and Spanish. There are also resources such as a Parent Leader Guide, LCAP Checklist, and Ed100 Toolbox.

Assembly Member Al Muratsuchi, Chair of the Education Committee: His goals for this year are to protect public school funding, pass a statewide school facilities bond, and pass a bill to prevent schools and public

libraries from banning books.

Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction: Don’t let anyone tell you that you have to accept bad choices for kids. ‘Parent rights’ don’t give us the right to threaten the safety of any child.

Jessica Bartholow, Chief of Staff to Senator Nancy Skinner: By describing her own very difficult childhood, Jessica showed us the physical and emotional impacts of

poverty and hunger on a child. She did not know free lunch was available at school until she was in 7th grade. Universal free lunch programs have improved mental health and discipline problems at schools.

State Senator Josh Newman, 29th Senate District: Pandemic funding is running out even as mental health and other issues continue. The state needs to maintain and build programs that provide for the whole child and the whole family the whole day.

Sue Oh, Student Board Member, California State PTA: Sue, a senior at Sunny Hills High School in Fullerton, told us about her many activities and projects, including an effort to include a student board

member on the Orange County Board of Education.

Assembly Member Diane Dixon, 72nd District: She has worked on bills related to fentanyl and regulating e-bikes. She has proposed a bill to create a sales tax holiday for school supplies during the first week of August to help families and small businesses.

Assembly Member Sharon Quirk-Silva, 67th District: In light of the budget deficit, school districts should plan to be as fiscally constrained as possible. There will be serious cuts, but lawmakers are trying to save the most beneficial programs.

Assembly Member Tri Ta, 70th District: The Mendez v. Westminster court decision was an important step in the desegregation of American schools. Ta has introduced a bill to require this case to be taught in social science classes.



Fourth District PTA advocates in Sacramento

Sacramento Safari Debrief

Friday, March 15 at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom

Sacramento Safari participants will receive a link via email. Join us for a review of what we learned and next steps you can take.

Save the date!
Fourth District PTA
Advocacy Forum
April 19 9:30 a.m.
Details will follow.