

CTA October 12-14, 2007 State Council Report

Christine Van Allen, AVTA Representative

CTA Mission Statement: “The California Teachers Association exists to protect and promote the well-being of its members; to improve the conditions of teaching and learning; to advance the cause of free, universal, and quality public education; to ensure that the human dignity and civil rights of all children and youth are protected; and to secure a more just, equitable, and democratic society.”

For the past year CTA has worked to urge Congress to fix NCLB to provide schools with the resources they need and was disappointed when George Miller, the Chair of the House Committee on Education and Labor, stubbornly refused to address our concerns. CTA believes that this reauthorization language is worse than the current NCLB legislation. However as of November 5, 2007, the two top lawmakers on the Senate Education Committee said they are putting off consideration of a new NCLB law until next year. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy D-Mass., and Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., have decided that there’s not enough time this year to complete the work on the legislation, which has not been formerly introduced. Thanks to CTA members’ phone calls and letters, there is a growing consensus that the law should be changed to encourage schools to measure individual student progress over time instead of using snapshot comparisons of certain grade levels. There is a consensus, as well, that the law should be changed so that schools that miss progress goals by a little don’t face the same consequences as schools that miss them by a lot. Deep divisions remain over some proposed changes including merit pay for teachers and whether schools should be judged based on test scores in subjects other than reading and math.

Committee Report Highlights:

Safety Committee: School violence continues to be a major source of concern. Information was received regarding a case from the 2nd Court of Appeals that upheld discipline of a student for posting a death threat to a teacher via an Internet instant message program. This case has potential to provide school districts with an avenue to discipline students for defamatory or threatening comments posted on MySpace and similar chat groups.

Another concern is teachers being asked to administer shots, blood sugar testing, insulin etc to students. We are waiting for a response from CTA Legal on this matter.

District guidelines should include guidelines during an emergency or lockdown, as well as staff communication during power outages.

Curriculum & Instruction: A referral was made to the Board of Directors concerning an Earth Science Petition that would change the status of Earth Science Education from a G to a D requirement under UC A-G requirements, the committee on curriculum & instruction recommends that CTA support the California Science Teachers Association’s proposal to change Earth Science from a G requirement to a D requirement lab science

The Retirement Committee recommends that CTA oppose the Richman Initiative (Public Employee Benefit Reform Act) if it appears on the 2008 June or November ballot. The committee goals are to keep

and maintain the CalSTRS/CalPERS Defined Benefit Programs, Eliminate the Social Security Offsets, Maintain and increase purchasing power, healthcare, dental and vision coverage for retirees and 2% vested COLA.

The Alternative, Career & Technical Education Committee will form a subcommittee of five volunteers to examine the impact of CAHSEE and other high stakes testing on CTE and other elective courses.

Financing Public Education Committee recommends that CTA constitute a study/work group to examine the impact of redevelopment areas and monies throughout the state to determine the funding consequences on public services and particularly public education and to develop an action plan to capture these funds more effectively.

A new business item from the **Negotiations Committee** is for CTA to sponsor legislation to require school districts to grant year for year teaching credit without limiting the number of years or steps a new employee can attain.

And finally the **Special Education Committee** has matters pending on retention/recruitment of special educators; Collaborate with SPS on appropriate response to “do-not-resuscitate” orders; NBI 10/02-6, cost of private placements for individuals with exceptional needs; NBI 10/03-5, aide services in special day classes; NBI 3/04-2, out-of-district placements when district placement is not available; Blended Programs; Impact of Transfer of Mental Health Services from County Mental Health to School Districts; NBI 1/07-17, out of state supervision of local speech-language para-professionals and over-identification of African American, Hispanic & Native American male students as “special needs”.

These are some of the issues state council is working on; please forward information or concerns on these issues to either Gary Roberts or me (Christine Van Allen).