

# 32<sup>nd</sup> District PTA Legislative Advocacy News

## Cut\$ Hurt Kids

### Tax Extensions Needed to Protect Our Schools

As we reported in our last issue, PTA supports the Governor's budget proposal containing a combination of cuts and revenue increases. The proposal strives to avoid the gimmicks, borrowing and unrealistic assumptions that have plagued budgets over the past many years. This proposal also seeks to somewhat protect education funding, which has taken the largest hit over the past three years of cuts (\$18 billion in cuts, or \$1,900 per student).

The important caveat is that extensions of taxes raised two years ago (and set to expire this year) must be approved by the legislature. We supported the legislature placing an initiative on the June ballot to "let the people decide". However, disappointingly, the legislature could not come to the 2/3-majority agreement to support such a measure in the time needed. At this point, the legislature has already made over \$11.5 billion in cuts, many of which affect services that are vital to so many parents and families, including higher education, child care, Healthy Families, public libraries, CalWORKs and foster care. Much of the \$12.5 billion in revenue extensions are allocated for education funding.

PTA is advocating for the legislature to extend the temporary revenues legislatively. The revenue extensions are needed to keep even deeper cuts from the classroom. After three years of catastrophic cuts to education, school funding is "falling off a cliff." Should the revenue extensions not be granted, the possibilities look grave. We are hearing that **the school year could be shortened by six weeks next year, and many school districts could face bankruptcy and even closure. Our children already struggle with overcrowded classrooms, outdated instructional materials and less time (e.g. furlough days) to learn essential curriculum.** Citizen demands for an educated workforce cannot be met with continuing diminishment of resources to its students.

Thirty-second District PTA's legislative advocacy committee is planning the following actions, and we hope you will join us:

- **PTA Letter/email/phone campaign – beginning this week:** Sample letters, emails and phone scripts for the Governor and legislative leaders are available for download on our website (<http://www.32ndpta.org/programs/advocacy.html>). Please follow the instructions and urge friends and family at your school (and around the state) to follow suit. Our leaders need to understand how critical this funding is to our schools
- **Rally for Education:** Friday, May 13, @ 4:00 p.m. (check website for exact time and BART information) at the United Nations Plaza at the San Francisco Civic Center. Join PTA and other members of the Education Coalition to speak up for children. Your attendance helps underscore for our legislators and the public the need for funding for our schools.

- **PTA Workshop – School Finance 101** - *How are California's Schools Funded, What is the Impact of Budget Cuts to our Local Schools, and What Can We Do?:* Monday, May 16, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., Contra Costa County Office of Education in Pleasant Hill

Business groups such as the California Chamber of Commerce and the Bay Area Council, as well as the Legislative Analysts Office, EdSource and California State PTA all agree that extending the temporary revenues is critical to prevent cataclysmic cuts to schools. A strong public education system – kindergarten through college – plus stable support programs and services for children and families are essential to California's future prosperity and a thriving economy.

For ongoing and timely information, please sign up now for California State PTA Legislation Alerts at [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org) (click the button on the right).

## **PTA Takes Positions on Legislation**

Did you know that California State PTA takes positions on ballot measures and bills in the legislature? You can find positions at [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org). Here are some key positions to be aware of:

- **Ballot Measure (June election): California Cancer Research Act (Support)** increases tax on cigarettes by \$1.00 per pack for use in smoking prevention and treatment
- **AB 18 (Brownley) – Support** - to produce a comprehensive plan for finance reform to support pupil achievement. PTA believes that we must work toward a long-term solution for adequate and stable education funding.
- **SCA 5 (Simitian) – Support** - a bill to lower the threshold for local school parcel taxes from the current two-thirds vote to a super majority of 55 percent, to allow local communities the option of passing local funding measures.
- We will continue to raise our voice on behalf of the state's more than 9 million children.

## **What Else Can PTAs do?**

- **Educate** your members and the public about budget concerns. District Legislation Committee members are available to speak on the subject at your meetings. Contact [nmvandell@comcast.net](mailto:nmvandell@comcast.net) to arrange a speaker.
- **Run a voter registration drive.** In many of our communities, voter turnout in November's election was lower than average. Does your high school have a program for sending voter registration forms to students as they turn 18? Visit the 32<sup>nd</sup> District website for detailed information on how to hold such a drive.
- **Establish a Legislative Advocacy chairman or vice president position in your PTA unit.** We can provide support and training.
- **Join our 32<sup>nd</sup> District PTA legislative advocacy e-mail list** for regular updates by contacting [nmvandell@comcast.net](mailto:nmvandell@comcast.net).
- **Join our 32<sup>nd</sup> District PTA legislative advocacy committee.** Any PTA member in Contra Costa County is welcome. Our next meeting is Friday, May 13, at 11:30 a.m. at the Contra Costa County Office of Education in Pleasant Hill.