

The first California Teachers Association State Council for the 2004-05 school year was filled with election information and jitters, future goals being set, introductions of new council members, and work – lots of work! We also got to hear from Robert Kennedy Jr. He was pretty cool and was even interviewed live from our hotel while appearing on the Bill Mahr Show.

If you're new to the California Teachers Association, I'd like to encourage you to check out the State Council section on our webpage: www.livermoreteachers.org for descriptions of state council procedures, the organizational structure of CTA and ways to contact your state council representatives.

Livermore is part of a "multiple" meaning that we pool our members together with Pleasanton and Dublin to get greater representation. There are currently four seats in the tri-valley and each local association holds a seat. The fourth seat is open to anyone in the valley and is currently held by a teacher in Pleasanton. Dublin is in the middle of a run-off and we'll know soon who that is. There is also an alternate for the valley in case someone is unable to attend.

Livermore was not the only association who applied for and received funds to support a local measure or school board candidate (we received \$3,000 for Measure D), so the Association for Better Citizenry Committee CTA/ABC was busy reporting out their information and regrouping for the next election.

Here are some interesting actions and informational items that came out of committees:

Special Education: The committee reminded Council members that Education Code section 56101 authorizes the State Board to waive any Ed Code requirements for high school graduation with a regular diploma, where the waiver is needed or helpful to implementing a student's IEP. There is some concern in many districts regarding the algebra requirement for graduation with a diploma in the special education community.

Language Acquisition: AB 2913 (Salinas) extends the SB 395/SB 1969 CLAD trainings from January 1, 2005 to January 1, 2008. This CLAD training option was going to end this year preventing experienced teachers from using this option to obtain their CLAD certificate. This bill also opens up the training to anyone who received their teaching credential prior to 1999.

Political Involvement: The political Academy for our region is March 11-13, 2005. Save this date if you are interested in attending or are involved with LEA's Political Action Committee. Don't forget to vote Tuesday November 2nd.

Teacher Evaluation & Academic Freedom: AB 954 (Goldberg) is being used by some locals to negotiate changes in their evaluation procedures. "This bill would authorize the evaluation and assessment at least every 5 years of personnel with permanent status who have been employed at least 10 years with the school district, are highly qualified, as defined, and whose previous evaluation rated the employee as meeting or exceeding standards, if the evaluator and certificated employee being evaluated agree to this term, with certain exceptions." In short, after ten years of teaching you could be evaluated every 3-5 years instead of every other year.

CTA is getting ready to distribute a “New Teacher Tip Sheet” about teachers’ rights. There was a lot of discussion regarding ESEA (the Elementary & Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind) and academic freedom. Scripted learning used by Open Court and Harcourt Brace are causing some locals to look at teacher’s rights in the area of academic freedom.

Early Childhood Education: This committee discussed the bill in the CA legislature that is attempting to allow different lengths of kindergarten teaching days at different schools in the same district. This is an equity issue for both teachers and students.

Professional Rights and Responsibilities: AB 1918 (Montanez) was vetoed by the Governor. This bill would have allowed educators to use up to 6 weeks of the 5-month period during which the employee receives differential pay to take time off work to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, parent, domestic partner, or to bond with a new child.

While we’ve been trying to expand the limited rights that temporary teachers have for many years, this summer we suffered a setback. In the case: Smith vs. Elk Grove Unified, a teacher with a Social Science Credential was hired to be a Resource Teacher and obtained an emergency credential. This teacher served for two years and began her third year in the district. During her third year, she was non-reelected. While the teacher should have been permanent in year three, the district claimed that her first two years didn’t count toward permanent status because she was working under an emergency credential. CTA stated that it should count because she was fully credentialed in another subject area. We lost. It is important for teachers **not to accept jobs outside of their credentialed area** if they have to get emergency credentials. This case is final and sets precedent, making it more difficult to battle cases like this in the future.

Curriculum & Instruction: This committee reminded members that the state is still seeking teachers to review and provide feedback on possible textbooks for the upcoming adoptions in the areas of Social Science and Physical Education. If you are interested in participating, give me a yell and I’ll get you in touch with the right people.

Retirement: SB 102 (Burton) was signed into law allowing teachers who retire after January 1, 2005 to use unused sick leave to make up for unpaid days off (including strike days) that have been docked from your STRS account. While AB 1102 (Knox) allowed this, it did not allow these make up days to count toward the longevity bonuses. SB 102 (Burton) fills that in and allows teachers to use unused sick leave to make up for unpaid days off AND allows them to count toward longevity bonuses. Yipeee!

Assemblyperson Richman is proposing to change CalSTRS from a “defined benefit plan” to a “defined contribution plan.” Obviously, CTA is opposed to this and CalSTRS is supporting our position to maintain a secure retirement through a defined benefit plan.

Alternative, Career & Technical Education: This committee is asking all teachers (no matter what your level is) to e-mail, call or fax your senators and representatives regarding the Carl Perkins Funding for technical education classes. Please ask them to:

- Support the higher funding level of \$1.215 billion provided in the House Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill for the Perkins Basic State Grant.

- Support the Senate funding level provided for the Occupational and Employment Information (Section 118) and Tech Prep Demonstration Project, which were eliminated in the House version of the bill.
- Ensure that all other Perkins Act programs are funded at no less than those passed in Fiscal Year 2004.
- Avoid across-the-board cuts to the bill that would reduce funding for vital education and job training programs.

Financing Public Education: We defeated the attempts to change the lottery funding formula that would have taken money away from schools and turned it into more prize money.

AB 825 (Firebaugh) has created a series of “categorical block grants” for school funding. One of these block grants is the “professional development” block grant. This can cause some changes to PAR and BTSA funding mechanisms as well as require certain amounts of money to be spent on “Reading and Language Arts” professional development. So, while the block grant is designed to allow districts to spend money in more flexible ways, how they spend it is more strictly dictated by the state.

Assessment & Testing: AB 1448 (Alpert) was signed by the Governor and deals with the “high stakes” tests that elementary students take. While we succeeded in keeping in the piece that exempts 2nd graders from the exams (bringing us in line with federal NCLB regulations) – it doesn’t do it for another three years. In the meantime though, new tests must be created due to this bill - starting with grade two. So, get ready for a new test for second graders; but be happy that it won’t be around for long.

Student Support Services: Remember when librarians and computer teachers used to be credentialed teachers? Well, more and more districts are asking teachers to take on health care responsibilities like diapering, feeding, injecting, etc. This work should be done by our highly-qualified, trained nurses. If you are asked to do these jobs, tell them no! Keep yourself free from liability and help a nurse keep their job at the same time – it’s a win-win situation for all educators.

Negotiations Committee: In some program improvement schools, teachers are being asked to sign a “commitment agreement” declaring “what they will do to help the schools.” If you are asked to do this, make sure that you are not signing a commitment agreement that violates your contract agreement. Review any such documents with a site representative.

All in all, it was an intense, yet informative weekend. If you’d like to know more about State Council or are interested in running for a State Council Representative position in the tri-valley area, feel free to contact me at LEAStateCouncil@livermoreteachers.org.

Many teachers don’t yet know about Works4Me, the teacher support list-serv from the National Education Association. Works4Me is a vehicle for instructional staff to share their ideas with other instructional staff. As such, it does not constitute an endorsement of any particular curriculum or teaching method by OWL.org, the National Education Association or any of its affiliates. You may subscribe by sending the message "**subscribe works4Me**" (without the quotation marks) to Lyris@list.nea.org