

4th District Sacramento Safari: March 30 - 31, 2009
Sacramento, California

Report by: Lori Abbott (unless otherwise stated)

Total Attendees from 4th District: 85

Capistrano Unified Council PTSA Attendees:

Kim Anderson: CUCPTSA Legislative Chair
Dana Hills HS & Niguel Hills MS Legislative Chair
Lori Abbott: Wagon Wheel Elementary Legislative Chair

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2009 – Embassy Suites Hotel

Paul Richman, Executive Director, CA State PTA

“Caucus is king, not the constituents”

“I see light at the end of the tunnel and I hope it’s not a train”

- The climate in Sacramento is one of stubbornness and a deep chasm exists between parties; there is fatigue, raw feelings being displayed, and frustration
- The budget in February was an honest attempt at a balanced approach
- Six essentials to Advocacy:
 1. Willingness to learn (listen and ask questions)
 2. Focus on relationships (information exchange)
 3. Adaptability (find different ways to advocate)
 4. Creativity (unique ways to campaign)
 5. Courage
 6. Perseverance (greatest strength as an organization – don’t give up)

Pat Dingsdale, Director of Legislation, CA State PTA

- A “neutral” position was added to the existing PTA choices of “support” and “oppose” for ballot initiative/measures
- PTA has given Propositions 1B and 1C a “support” designation. They are still working/struggling on 1A
- It will be back to the drawing board if there is a \$8 billion shortage
- All bets are off if the ballot measures do not pass
- The PTA Economic Recovery Plan is Invest in the Children

Debbie Look, Director of Legislation-Elect, CA State PTA

- PTA is screening bills and deciding which bills are priorities
- If a support position is taken, PTA will “guide” the bill through the process
- Some bills being looked at by State PTA
 1. SCA6 (Simitian) – This is the 4th time this bill has been introduced – it will change the local school parcel tax passage requirement from 2/3 to 55% (SUPPORT)
 2. AB 8 (Brownley) – convening working group on school finance reform (SUPPORT)
 3. AB60 (Coto) - Make school funding more rational. Weighted student formula (SUPPORT)
 4. AB351 (Salas) – No position taken yet. It will give P.E. credits for things like marching band, ROTC etc.
 5. AB476 (Torlakson) – Remove 2nd grade from STAR testing
 6. AB95 (Torlakson) – Increase lunch reimbursement for schools
 7. SB1 (Steinberg, Alquist)
 8. PTA is screening bills and deciding which bills are priorities
- State Ed Coalition is comprised of labor & management groups plus state PTA. The Ed Coalition is all over the map on the May 19 propositions: CA Teachers Association (CTA) will support all the

propositions whereas the CA Federation of Teachers (CFT) opposes all but 1B. Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) supports them all whereas California School Boards Association (CSBA) is recommending NO on all but 1B – polling their members now to ratify that.

Jim Mayer, Executive Director, CA Forward

Report by: Kim Anderson

California Forward is a bi-partisan group, working in the public interest for governance reform.

- A (draft) vision for California:
 - Strong economies and high quality jobs
 - Effective & equitable education systems
 - Safe communities
 - Good health outcomes
 - Clean energy & environment
 - Efficient housing & transportation
 - A requirement from public structure:
 - ❖ On-going investment in infrastructure
 - ❖ Region level planning & government cooperation
 - ❖ Efficient public services
 - ❖ More public involvement in public decisions
- Obstacles to vision:
 - Chronic fiscal problems
 - Short term focus
 - Unresponsive bureaucracies & weak accountability
 - Lack of public trust & confidence
 - Unwillingness to face real choices (by the public as well as policymakers)
- Interrelated fiscal issues:
 - Spending
 - Revenue
 - State/local relationship
- State budget process:
 - Annual budget – based on previous year plus growth. Ca Forward suggests projecting & proposing a 2-year budget while enacting a 1-year one.
 - Persistent deficit – spending grows even when revenue drops
 - Political gridlock – results in delayed decisions
 - Ballot-box budgeting – creates constraints
- Goals: focus on priorities, outcomes & better value:
 - Look at long terms fiscal impacts of any budget
 - Have to allocate \$ better
 - To ease political gridlock – redistricting, open primary & redistricting
- Status of budget reforms – proposed changes:
 - Multi-year plan (will be introduced in May)
 - Performance based budget - SB777/AB1382 due to be heard at end of April
 - Budget reserve to even out surges (Prop 1A solves this issue)
 - New programs have funding source (pay as you go)
 - With regard to changing the 2/3 budget threshold – heard from Californians that they want to see other reforms before they'll support that.
- Paying Forward – responsible revenue reform:
 - Tax reform backdrop...
 - ❖ current system contributed to feast or famine
 - ❖ disconnect between spending policy & tax policy
 - ❖ recession straining unresolved issues
 - ❖ New Commission on 21st Century Economy is exploring options
 - Taxes...
 - ❖ Income – personal & corporate

- ❖ Consumption – sales tax
- ❖ Property – property tax & VLF
- CA's tax burden compared with other states:
 - ❖ Income tax – one of the highest & is progressive
 - ❖ Sales – high compared to other states, yet applies to fewer transactions
 - ❖ Corporate – one of highest rates
 - ❖ Property tax – one of lowest

Bottom line on taxes: CA is pretty close to the middle.

- New ideas re taxes:
 - Carbon tax
 - Property tax – no change to the 1% but change the non-residential assessment

Gavin Payne, Chief Deputy Supt. of Public Instruction, CA Dept of Ed

- We need \$20 - \$30 billion yearly to meet educational expectations
- Everything is on the table
- The philosophy of the State Dept of Education is to get the federal money out the door as quickly as possible
- Guidance from the federal government received April 1, turn around time should be about 2 weeks, then another 2-week turn around time from federal government, so local districts should see money by late April
- They hope to help local school districts ease the May cuts
- If 1A thru 1C don't pass we will have to "do it all over again" – cut the February budget again
- State and federal watchdogs will make sure lottery money will not be stripped away if 1C fails
- The stimulus money will not be way-laid in Sacramento
- The federal government will look, every 2 months, at what CA is doing with the stimulus money
- Local school districts should not add stimulus money to their base as it is one-time money
- The state will send 100% of the stimulus money to local school districts

Jean Ross, Director, CA Budget Project

- Every year is a little different
- The budget passed in February was created totally behind closed doors
- There were no opportunities for the public to have a say
- The ballot arguments were drafted by the Legislators and Governor behind closed doors on purpose
- When measures are written and deals crafted between midnight and 5 a.m. just to get one vote, that is a "deeply flawed situation"
- Discussed the propositions:
 1. Prop 1A – no immediate impact on the budget (not until the Governor is out of office); there is a limit to how much money can be pulled out during bad years; there is a limit on how much money is put it and is dependent on inflation; is what we spent in the last 10 years good enough for the future
 2. Prop 1B – tied to 1A; resolves difference of opinion on Test 1 vs. Test 3
 3. Prop 1C – is a "hunting license"; try to sell bonds paid out of lottery proceeds
 4. Prop 1D – diverts money from Prop 10
 5. Prop 1E – diverts money from Prop 63
- The only winners in the state budget are corporations, especially large multi-state ones, who received permanent tax cuts

George Skelton, Political Columnist, Los Angeles Times

"Hold the ruling party accountable"

- Moved to Sacramento in the fall of 1961 and started writing for the Times in 1974
- The state capitol has never been more dysfunctional than the last few years
- He doesn't blame the politicians; rather it's the fault of an unworkable system
- The biggest obstacles are:

- The 2/3 majority needed for budget passage – the only other states that have the same requirement are Arkansas and Rhode Island. More than anything else, that needs to be changed to a 50% or 55% majority to pass a budget.
- Term limits prevent any long term thinking. They can't be erased, but they should be extended to 12 years
- Gerrymandering of districts another cause of dysfunction – Prop 11 (redistricting) should take care of that.
- Too many special interests – both sides are guilty (examples – CTA, prison guards, Indian Casino tribes)
- Initiative system is out of control. Solution: permit them only in Special Elections and allow legislature to tweak them to avoid unintended consequences as a result of them being poorly written
- Unlikely that we'll see public financing of campaigns but one solution would be to require 24 hour online reporting of any contribution of \$100 or more
- There are 2 initiatives circulating from labor unions for next year
- If propositions 1A thru 1C fail, we will then hit bottom
- Proposition 1C is "horrible policy"
- If the propositions don't pass, then there could be 1 week less school, K-3 CSR will be eliminated, and we will lose arts/music
- You can blame Prop 13 for being part of the problem – that disconnected local spending decisions & put in the hands of Sacramento.

Scott Plotkin, Executive Director, CA School Boards

- This is the first net reduction for schools since the depression
- In the last 18 months, there has been a 16% drop in per pupil funding
- If the propositions fail, there will be an additional \$5-\$6 billion on top of the \$8 billion hole
- Schools take a proportionately larger cut, yet still fully funded under Prop 98
- The 3-tier system protects the largest chunks of money
- Categorical flexibility was not going to be able to save everything
- Even if the propositions do pass, there is still an \$8 billion hole, so there will probably be an initiative to authorize reducing the school year by 5 days
- In the past, the 2/3 majority needed to pass a budget would drive the extremes towards each other and the middle, now it's become a leverage power; nobody is determined enough to compromise and work together for a solution
- The majority used to be moderates, but term limits eased people out
- We need to return local revenue raising to local districts. That ended with Serrano/Priest. Prop 13 made it worse.
- Turn the clocks back and fund schools from property taxes; 80% local property taxes and 20% categoricals
- Propositions are quick fixes, not long-term solutions
- Question to ponder – Do I vote for a lot of stuff that is really bad, or defeat the propositions and force another 2/3 vote for cuts?
- CSBA is against 1A, 1C, 1D, 1E and supports 1B
- NCLB – Obama administration wants reauthorization of elementary and secondary acts
- There is a problem comparing schools' scores to the National test; state-to-state tests are not comparable to the NAP
- Arne Duncan is in favor of charter schools, alternative schools
- Two uses for stimulus money – mitigate effects of layoffs and budget cuts; use for reform to close the achievement gap
- States will have to prove the money was used for the appropriate reasons or they won't get the second round of money
- By mid-April a law suit will be filed by CSBA, ACSA, civil rights groups to get the school funding system declared unconstitutional leading to testing the waters on local control

Ron Bennett, President, School Services of California

“I don’t see anything happening with public education that isn’t happening with everyone else”

- In the past 18 months, CA has lost 650,00 jobs
- California is 47th and moving down
- Education funding level is 2005/2006, but at 2009/2010 costs
- In the pre-Prop 13 years CA was in the top 5 for per pupil spending
- States like Massachusetts, New Jersey and Vermont receive \$5000 per student more
- School’s share of property taxes is \$15 billion and that needs to double
- The legislature needs a cooperative effort to pass a budget, not the “3 vote system”
- If the propositions fail there will be a huge hole in the budget
- Expect the “May revise” around June 8
- Although the revenues are below projections, that doesn’t necessarily mean an \$8 billion deficit
- Suggests delaying school budget deadline from June 30 to July 31
- 7% less money for school districts in 2009/2010
- Record number of layoff notices
- Class sizes are the highest in the nation. We need to double the number of teachers to match MA, NJ, VT
- We’ve dropped from 6th to 8th largest economy in the world
- Is the state ready to listen to public opinion and take action?
- Individual legislators are listening, but 120 together are not ready to come together
- Legislators feel the pressure of their party because they are always running for re-election
- Parties are stronger with term limits, but individual legislators are not
- Lots of local control for MA, NJ, VT whereas in CA the money comes from the state

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009 – Legislative Office Building (morning)

Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff to Assembly Speaker Karen Bass

- ACA4 – Proposal to pass a budget with a simple majority by June 15; after June 15 it would need a 2/3 vote. This would need a 2/3 majority to get on the ballot
- Arguments against 1A are coming from both extremes. The far left says there are too many restraints on spending money; the far right says the taxes will last 4 years
- The trend line is linear regression
- A majority vote is needed to move funds from the rainy day fund to the general fund.
- He spoke about each proposition and if/when there’s a fiscal impact

Paul Navarro, Deputy Legislative Secretary to Gov. Schwarzenegger

- We aren’t achieving as well because of the rise of the unions – use of resources.
- We need personnel to help coach/fill in the gaps
- Federal money – merit pay proposal
- It’s time to force the debate with the unions – pay cut vs. losing jobs
- The plan is to roll all the money (IDEA, Title 1) through to local school districts
- About 67% of the money will come in late April and the other 33% this summer
- Term limits are a problem
- There will be \$14 billion in cuts only if propositions don’t pass – there will be no further taxes

Susanna Cooper, Principal Ed Consultant to Sen. President Pro Tem, Darrell Steinberg

- Senator Steinberg is concerned about High School dropouts
- Focus on CTE (Career Tech Education)
- Adjust the API score to include dropouts
- CTE Centers – Career tech combined with academic classes lead to a degree (SP675)
- Look for ways to fund education outside Prop 98
- He has a vision for a well-rounded education
- The state-wide dropout rate is 21%

Mac Taylor, CA Legislative Analyst

“We would like to see schools have their own funding source”

- Passed out a copy of “The Fiscal Outlook Under the February Budget Package” from March 13 and reviewed several charts/graphs with everyone. These addressed how the February budget closed the \$40 billion shortfall, Prop 98 funding for the 2 fiscal years covered by the budget, tax increases which would be extended by the passage of Prop 1A, and operating shortfalls which are expected to grow dramatically through 2013/2014
- Deferring expenses is to not make cuts to important programs right now
- Give local school districts the ability to raise/lower taxes to meet their own needs
- Block grants vs. so many categoricals

Chris Finarelli, Legislative Aide to Senator Bob Huff, Senate Ed Comm

- Senator Huff’s education priorities are drop out rates, lower standards, and state-wide performance
- SB266: enrollment policies (state wide open enrollment as long as there is room); creates a competitive environment; money will follow the student
- SB680: Romero/Huff combined on this one; provides a district of choice if there’s room; provides funds due to new mandates; applies to special education as well as long as it doesn’t require a new program. There is an urgency clause so if it is signed it would go into affect immediately. There is no transportation element. The cost is TBD, but thinking it will be minimal. Neighborhood kids have priority, but once a student is accepted from out of district, they are permanent.

Gerry Shelton, Assembly Education Consultant

- Theme of transparency in Brownley’s bills – there are not many people around who understand education finance.
- There is a gap between research and what is needed to make a bill
- AB8 – Small working group and bring in experts; this leads to writing a bill to simplify school finance; it’s empowering to help state positions to school boards and make it easier to advocate
- AB314 – gets rid of redundancy in approving instructional materials
- There are 27 bills in education committee to be heard on April 1 – usually there are around 40-45
- Reauthorization of STAR testing will occur in 2010/2011. There may be no STAR testing for 2nd graders which would save \$2 million

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009 – Capitol Building (afternoon)

The afternoon was dedicated to small group legislator visits to advocate for PTA positions.

Senator Mark Wyland

- Group of 4 people (1 from Irvine, 1 from Huntington, 1 from Harbor and Lori Abbott with CUCPTSA) met with Tanya Wolters, Legislative Assistant since Senator Wyland had to get ready to go to the Senate floor
- Each member of the group shared with Tanya how the budget cuts were affecting their school district and what measures were being taken. Lori Abbott left the CUCPTSA packet with her.
- Senator Wyland popped his head in to say hi and ended up talking with the group for about 10 minutes
- He started out by saying that we need to advocate for more special education funding from the federal government – they need to pay their share
- We need to support businesses so that they are able to pay more taxes on profits
- In theory he thought he would support AB8
- Tanya thought he would be against SCA6
- He would favor testing the waters on the 2/3 budget passage threshold. He said it would never get through the legislature that it would have to come from groundswell movement by voters to get on the ballot

Speaker, Karen Bass
Report by: Kim Anderson

- The majority of the group was able to have a brief “meet & greet” with Speaker Karen Bass on the Assembly floor, kindly arranged by Mr. Rick Simpson.
- The Speaker thanked us all profusely for what we do as PTA and urged us to keep fighting for the children of California. She shared that a note of thanks to the six Republican legislators who voted for the February budget would be greatly appreciated.

Senator Gloria Romero – Chair Senate Education Committee
Report by: Kim Anderson

- Six of us were assigned to meet with Senator Romero (1 from Harbor Council, 3 from Huntington Union, 1 from Orange & myself).
- The Senate was in session so she invited us to go onto the Senate floor in order for us to meet with her.
- Going onto the Senate floor, I had the opportunity to talk briefly with the Senate pro Tem, Darrell Steinberg.
- While Senator Gloria Romero was speaking with our group about education issues and we were sharing PTA’s priorities, Senator Lou Correa came over and joined us.
- At my request, he very graciously went over & asked Senator Mimi Walters to come & say hello, which she did.
- Senators Romero & Correa then jointly announced our group to the Senate floor.
- Senator Abel Maldonado came over to chat.