

March 10, 2010 Sacramento Advocacy Trip – Full Report

5 schools were represented:

2 High Schools – Dana Hills, San Juan Hills

2 Middle Schools – Marco Forster & Niguel Hills

1 Elementary School – John Malcom

5 Attendees:

Kim Anderson – CUCPTSA Legislative Co-Chair and Dana Hills High School
Legislation Co-Chair

Alli Maier – CUCPTSA Sacramento Advocacy Chair, Malcom Elem, /Marco
Forster Middle School Legislation Chair

Erin Kutnik – San Juan Hills High School Legislation Chair

Marilyn Amato – PTA President, Dana Hills High School

Kara Ahmann – Dana Hills High School Legislation Co-Chair and
Niguel Hills Middle School Legislation Co-Chair

Held 8 meetings:

- **Jim Mayer – Executive Director, California Forward**
- **Cory Jaspersen – Education Consultant, Senator Joe Simitian**
- **Paul Navarro – Deputy Legislative Secretary to Governor Schwarzenegger**
- **Adonai Mack – ACSA Legislative Advocate**
- **Assemblyman Chris Norby – Member of ASM Education Committee**
- **Marisol Avina, Chelsea Kelley & Sophia Kwong Kim – Assembly Education Committee Consultants, Democratic Caucus**
- **Gino Folchi – Legislative aide to Assembly Member Diane Harkey**
- **Rick Simpson – Deputy Chief of Staff to Speaker of the Assembly, John Perez**

Jim Mayer – Executive Director, California Forward

By: Marilyn Amato

- The session began with questions from Mr. Mayer
 - § Wanted to know specifics on CUSD
 - Group filled Mr. Mayer in on district criteria – student population, # schools, size and API score.
 - § Wanted to know where CUSD stands on Parcel Taxes
 - Told him there was likely not much support for such a tax in our district
 - School Board has not indicated much inclination to put these before the voters
 - Some communities within our district have to pay Mello Roos
- Economy – one of huge challenges
 - § All sides need to cooperate and work together
- Belief that Government wastes a lot of money

- § Need to show how things can be done more efficiently
 - § Need to establish confidence and trust
- Are there business people who can sit down to discuss becoming more efficient in the education world?
 - § Regarding insurance policies, etc.?
 - § Show the due diligence on how and what has been done.
- Ed. Code Mandates
 - § List what we can do with what money
 - § How to get there better, faster, and cheaper
 - § There is a gap of reality between schools and legislators
 - § Ed codes give restrictions but look at what could be done within the Ed Code and outside of that.
- Update on California Forward
 - § They are working on a long term solution
 - § Must have the right reforms so we can move the state forward
 - § California is much worse because of the way that the money has been managed for last decade.
 - Need reform that lies in the middle
- Republicans don't want to give up the 2/3 vote on the budget
 - It's a political power issue
 - They might give it up for fiscal discipline
- California Forward's goals:
 - We must better manage the spikes in the economy
 - Use a "Pay-Go" system – where revenue sources are identified for any proposed new spending
 - Spend, but remember one time income should be used for one-time expenditures.
- Working with the legislature: Legislature is ready to take California Forward's ideas and put them into bills
 - They will plan to hold a series of hearing over the next 6 weeks.
 - It will require Republican votes
 - There is a 10% chance of getting this through
- Two other measures are still gathering signatures to be on the November 2010 ballot:
 - § Simple Majority vote on budget with no reforms
 - § Chamber of Commerce measure that would narrow what constitutes a fee
- California Forward will continue to raise money
 - § See what passes or what doesn't.
 - § Would likely re-file in December
 - § What comes next
 - Action Fund will be rolled out late Spring
 - Planning to hold regional & community meetings to:

- Restructure state/local government
- Restructure the state's revenue structure
- Rethink role of legislature
- Term-limits may be on ballot in November 2010. There would be no grandfathering for current legislators and it would include some flexibility.

Additional notes on Jim Mayer

By: Alli Maier

- ◆ The discussion is always about dollars, but dollars does not translate to impact.
- ◆ Anecdotes are compelling but easily undermined. Data & tracking is needed to actually gather the impact of cuts – the “right now” effects.
- ◆ We don't document our level of efficiency – only our level of compliance. The private sector has this down BUT not the public sector. From these streams of information, we can and need to learn how to squeeze rather than cut. This will result in a change in the perception that there's so much “waste, fraud & abuse” and less dilution.
- ◆ Regarding the spikes in the economy: “We spent our Xmas bonuses like we had a pay raise”.
- ◆ Reform: both sides of the aisle are equal opportunity offenders. The Reeps want a spending cap. The Dems want no discipline. There is a middle ground here – give up the 2/3 vote in exchange for fiscal disciplines such as Pay-Go (as long as it doesn't apply to taxes) & Spike Management. When there's a spike, find a way to spend it in a one-time fashion or give a tax cut.
- ◆ COC Bill – will be on the ballot. It narrows what constitutes a “fee” so the fear that a simple majority vote will give the opportunity to raise taxes & fees will be eliminated & counteracted with this measure.
- ◆ DeSaulnier/Feuer Committee has 3 focuses.
 - Move the CA Forward Agenda
 - Pay-Go for Initiatives
 - Institute requirements for how the legislature operates

Cory Jaspersen/Senator Simitian's office

By: Erin Kutnik

- We introduced ourselves and shared information about our district, students, and PTA.
- Our district has made \$60 million in cuts over the past three years and we are looking at another \$34 million for 2010-11.
- We explained the three-pronged approach that PTA is taking to solve the budget problem
- Cory told us about SCA-6 (Simitian bill) that is on the senate floor and would lower the 2/3 threshold vote to a 55% majority to pass a parcel tax. Senator believes it

supports local control. He said that Republicans consider it a “tax increase” because the 2/3 threshold was set by Prop. 13. Cory thought that there was a good chance it could pass with an oversight committee.

- He said that it takes \$3 million to gather signatures for a statewide initiative and \$20 million to run the campaign.
- He said they are continuing to work on this issue and not “quitting.”
- We spoke to him about the Adequacy Lawsuit that PTA has joined in against the state.
- Budget: Cory said that the LAO is having a hard time estimating what the Prop. 98 funding level is. There are too many unknowns. The Governor was not to go back to the 08/09 level as the base for next year instead of 09/10. Prop. 98 funding gets certified 18 months after the school year is over. That official number comes late. Last year they assumed “Test 3” and \$49.1 billion was the target number.
- Now the Governor is saying that we were really in a “Test 1” and so we have been “over-funded.” It is a shell game to avoid suspending Prop. 98 for next year by reducing the base funding level. Anytime you talk about suspending Prop. 98 it’s very politically unpopular.
- Next year’s budget will be even tougher without the temporary \$11 billion tax revenues, which will go away.
- There is temporary reform in education right now in the form of categorical flexibility. There is talk of more permanent reform but nothing-concrete happening.
- One idea is in categoricals. Staff development for example has tons of programs and Senator Simitian proposed a block grant to simplify it.
- There is still an equalization issue with home-to-school transportation in that some districts get 100% reimbursement and some districts get nothing.

Paul Navarro, Deputy Legislative Secretary to Governor Schwarzenegger

By: Alli Maier

- The race for Governor is not a foregone conclusion-- a Democrat or a Republican can win in November. It all depends on turnout and the general mood of the voting public.
- This may be the year for Republican Women (Meg Whitman for Governor, Mimi Walters for State Treasurer, etc.)
- Paul believes that Meg Whitman operates on the 20/80 rule: focus on the 20% of things that make 80% of the difference and let the rest go.
- Abel Maldonado will most likely get confirmed as Lieutenant Governor by May.
- RE: next year’s budget being even worse: No, the economy is slowly recovering and the state’s finances will be rebounding.
- CA Forward’s ideas will be difficult to get much traction. The republicans will never agree to giving up the 2/3 budget vote. The Dem’s seem to think that this budget majority vote will solve all the problems – that it is a big panacea.
- RE: Prop 14 – Paul is very receptive to the Open Primary idea.

Paul reiterated that both he & the Governor care very much about CA’s children in the public school system & will do their level best to protect the kids. Education is something they both care deeply about, as well as all social service programs that affect children.

Adonai Mack – ACSA (Association of CA School Administrators)
Legislative Advocate

By: Kara Ahmann

The son of a superintendent, Adonai is from Davis, CA and attended Morehouse College in Atlanta. He has 3 children, a 19 year old, a 15 year old, and a preschooler. Before coming to ACSA 2 ½ years ago, he worked for Secretary of Education Gary Hart for several years, as a lobbyist for Jack O'Connell, and for the California School Boards Association.

Principals are overwhelmed with all they have to do. They are the instructional leaders, the disciplinarians and are expected to attend IEPs as well as community and sporting events.

Administrators now have 2 years, instead of 3, to give new teachers notice of “non re-elect.” They do not need to give any reason for this decision, which is a trade-off for the shorter time frame required for tenure.

Adonai likes the school finance lawsuit against the State of CA, but is unsure of how far it will go and if it will be adjudicated. However, it is a way to get advantage and show that the state is not adequately funding education in a way that we want it to work and in the way we want the kids to learn. This lawsuit is not asking for a specific amount of money. They are expecting that the lawsuit will be filed sometime in April.

It is a complicated budget this year and there is quite a shell game going on with numbers.

It is time to look at Prop 98 differently. It is working the way it is supposed to when revenue is up and education funding goes up and likewise when revenue is down and other parts of the budget go down. The manipulation of Prop 98 is what makes it irrelevant. Politically no one wants to vote for its suspension, and there are always people who are creative to find ways to get around this.

One solution for education funding is more local control. ACSA had been working with labor, environmental groups, cities, counties, and CSBA on an initiative to allow local taxes (not parcel taxes) to pass with a 55% majority instead of a 2/3 vote. They have backed down from this because it was only polling at about 47 – 51%, and it is very expensive to collect the required signatures.

Lowering the passing percentage of the parcel tax would be “really huge.” Parcel taxes that have not passed in many districts because of the 2/3 vote would pass with 55%.

The Ed Coalition is concerned about the gas tax swap and wants to ensure that education funding is held harmless in any such maneuver.

After Prop 98 was suspended and the maintenance factor was not repaid, there was a lawsuit to regain this money. As a result money was supposed to come back to lower decile schools as part of what's called QEIA (Quality Education and Investment Act), and the rest of the schools lost out. SB84 protects these schools receiving QEIA funds.

Adonai's best guess is that the cuts to education will remain in the May Revise. He advises to wait and see what happens in March and April in terms of the state's revenues, but to prepare for the worst. There will be fighting over proposed administrator cuts.

Assemblyman Chris Norby, Member ASM Education Committee

By: Marilyn Amato

- Assemblyman Norby has been in office about one month
 - § Very new and says that everybody says to cut someone else, not their group.
- He asked about categoricals
 - § We told him we would like to see block grants with a lot of flexibility to choose within certain areas
- Asked us for ideas on where to cut.
 - § If he is to fight for kids, where is the money to come from?
 - § We explained that it is his job, as an elected official, to make the decisions – not ours. However, we would be happy to guide him to areas we believe can sustain adjustment (and away from Education).
- He said he would like information on how and where to cut
 - § Suggested we give him ideas
 - § Look at the budget
 - § Tell where reforms should come from
 - § He expressed openness to revenue increases in lieu of further cuts to Education.
- He suggested that trustees and legislators go back to the classroom and see what it is like today since the implementation of Prop. 98.
- We suggested he do likewise, as he was a teacher for 20 years, and would similarly be surprised to see how much his campus has changed since he was a teacher (due to cuts).

Marisol Avina, Sophia Kwong Kim, and Chelsea Kelley
Assembly Education Committee Consultants

By: Kim Anderson

- We shared CUSD's background with them - # students, # schools, physical size, and student population breakdown by GATE, ELL & Special Ed, and API score.
- A/M Julia Brownley's AB 8 was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger but now the A/M has introduced AB 2335 to replace AB 8 and they are working closely with the Governor's office. A/M Brownley really wants to formalize this process on school reform efforts. This bill would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to study prescribed topics relating to a school-based financial reporting system and to make findings and recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor about these topics on or before December 1, 2011. (*On March 11, this bill was referred to the Ed Comm.*).
- Lots of discussion about the possibility of suspending Prop 98 and what will end up happening on that for 2010-11.

- There is a dramatic difference between how schools look now and how they looked 10-20-30 years ago in terms of class size, counselors, librarians, school nurse ratios etc.
- NCLB has virtually eliminated everything but teaching to the test.
- Kids will encumber our system if we do not educate them properly.
- CTE options are critical to the success of many students.
- Race To The Top (RTTT) – they anticipate that we will see legislation to make additional changes in an effort to make California even more competitive on the Round 2 application.

Gino Folchi - Legislative Aide to Assembly Member Diane Harkey

By: Erin Kutnik

- We introduced ourselves and shared information about our district, students, and PTA.
- Our district has made \$60 million in cuts over the past three years and we are looking at another \$34 million this year.
- We explained the three-pronged approach that PTA is taking to solve the budget problem
- Told Gino that we need to invest in the future of California by educating our children
- Gino told us that Diane does care about kids and wants to protect Prop. 98. He wanted to know what they were supposed to cut instead.
- He told us that in 2000-2001, the legislature voted for union employees to retire at 50 with 95% of their salaries and that those pensions are unsustainable.
- Diane says we cannot borrow or tax our way out of this. We need structural change. She wants to set up a rainy day fund. We need to have reserves. She also wants to “reign in” bond debt.
- Diane is currently running a bill for Adult Education. AB1735. It would provide that if you are an adult and you want to go to school, at the end of the year you could get a tax credit for up to 50% of the tuition.
- Gino said that many good bills are killed because of party lines.
- Another bill is AB1719 and it says that if a manufacturer buys equipment for their business, they can be exempt from the sales tax. This used to be a law that sunsetted in 2004. She is trying to bring it back

Rick Simpson – Deputy Chief of Staff to Assembly Speaker John Perez

By: Kara Ahmann

Reform:

Speaker Perez and CA Forward, together with Senate President pro Tem, Darrell Steinberg, Senator DeSaulnier, and Assembly Member Feuer, will announce a large reform package tomorrow, which will include budget, legislative, and some initiative reform. This package

includes reforms proposed by CA Forward and work from the joint Senate and Assembly Committees on Improving State Government. This will be introduced through a constitutional amendment, plus two bills and will include

- Beefing up oversight committees
- Reducing bill limits by about 1/3 (from about 40 to 27), but allows for exceptions of bipartisan-authored measures – Rick personally does not like reducing bills because this limits smaller voices to political access.

Budget:

- February revenues are up over projection to the tune of about \$2.1 billion. If revenue keeps on growing, it might offset the governor's several billion dollars he had included in federal revenues, which are unlikely to be received; California can expect to receive \$3 or 4 billion from the federal government, not \$7 billion, which the governor had included in his proposed budget. Rick does not expect the ultimate budget to be worse for education than the January proposed budget.
- The big income items in the budget are personal income tax, monthly sales tax, and the bank incorporation tax, paid quarterly.
- The \$2.4 billion dollars that the LAO has identified as a reduction in the minimum funding guarantee under Prop 98 could potentially be closer to \$4 billion when one considers a district's spendable resources and past deferrals. Districts currently have been allowed to spend down on restricted reserves and are relying on federal stimulus dollars.
- It is very unlikely that there would be a 2/3 vote to raise revenue and Prop 98 may end up being suspended. He agrees with suspending Prop 98 because it would give education more security in the end.
- California does have a "rainy day" fund, the budget stabilization account, which was established in 2004. However, there is nothing in it, "since it has been raining ever since it was established."
- Rick is not sure whether California will receive anything in the second round of Race to the top funding.

Rick is not a fan of the open primary because it eliminates the 3rd party from CA politics. He is concerned about redistricting because most elected officials in competitive districts are anxious about every vote they take as compared to representatives in "safe seats" who are not afraid to cast votes.

The Attorney General writes the ballot labels, and the LAO writes the measure information for voter pamphlets and the sentence on the fiscal impact. Proponents and opponents write the pros and cons.