

March 10, 2010 Sacramento Advocacy Trip – Executive Summary

By: Alli Maier – Sacramento Advocacy Chair, Malcom/Marco Legislation Chair

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, Dana Hills High School Legislation Co-Chair

Erin Kutnik – San Juan Hills High School Legislation Chair

Alli Maier – CUCPTSA Sacramento Advocacy Chair, Malcom Elem, /Marco Forster Middle 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 Jasperson** – *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*

Things we heard consistently:

Education and Prop. 98

- The suggestion was made that trustees & legislators, both, should go back to actual classrooms and see what it is like today since the implementation of Prop. 98
- 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 time to look at Prop 98 differently. It is working the way it is supposed to when revenue is up & education funding goes up & likewise when revenue is down & 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 enough to find ways to get around this.

- The LAO is having a hard time estimating what the Prop 98 funding level actually is. There are too many unknowns.
- The Governor is supposed to go back to the prior year's funding level as a base for the next year. He went back even further and asserted that Education had been "over funded."
- It is a shell game to avoid suspending Prop 98.
- The last time Prop 98 was suspended & the maintenance factor was not repaid, there was a lawsuit to regain this money. As a result, the money only went back to the lowest decile schools as part of what has called the QEIA (Quality Education & Investment Act). The rest of schools lost out. Incidentally, SB84 (Senate Bill) aims to protect these schools receiving QEIA funds.
- The Ed Coalition is concerned about the gas tax swap (a portion of this just passed by the Governor) & wants to ensure that education funding is held harmless in any such maneuver.
- CTE (Career Tech Ed) options are critical to the success of many students.

REFORM

- CA Forward's ideas will not get much traction by the republicans because they will never give up the 2/3 budget vote. The democrats, however, think that the budget majority vote is a step in the right direction of long-term reform.
- Another solution for education funding is more local control in the form of an initiative, on the ballot to allow local taxes (not parcel taxes) to pass with a 55% majority instead of a 2/3 vote. However, gathering signatures is very expensive to do (around \$3-4 million, then another \$20 million to run the campaign).
- There is also movement afoot to give school districts more flexibility by lowering the passing percentage of the parcel tax from a 2/3 vote to a 55% simple majority vote. This is currently a bill that is on the senate floor – SCA6 by Senator Joe Simitian.
- Senator Simitian is also proposing the conversion of some categoricals into block grants to enable further flexibility at the local level.
- Term limits are debilitating to the governance process.
- We need structural change. We cannot borrow or tax our way out of this any further.
- We need reserves & to reign in bond debt, but many good bills are killed along party lines.
- The Governor vetoed ASM Julia Brownley's AB8, but she has reintroduced the idea in AB2335 & is working closely with the Governor's office. This bill would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to study prescribed topics relating to a school-based financial reporting system & to make finds & recommendations to the legislature & the Governor about these topics.
- Speaker Perez, CA Forward, Senate President Pro Tem, Darrell Steinberg, Senator DeSaulnier & ASM Feuer announced, this week, a large reform package. It includes budget, legislative & initiative reforms proposed by CA Forward; working together with the Senate & Assembly Committees on improving state government. These reforms are being introduced through a constitutional amendment, plus 2 bills that includes a) beefing up oversight committees b) reducing bill limits by about 1/3 (from 40-27), allowing for exceptions.

RACE TO THE TOP FUNDING ("RTTT")

- While CA did not make it to the first round of funding disbursement, there is anticipation that we will see legislation to make additional changes in an effort to make CA even more competitive on the Round 2 application.

PROP 14(Open Primary)

- A mixed bag of support vs. fundamental opposition. Some feel that the Open Primary because it eliminates the 3rd party from CA politics. The concern is that redistricting causes most elected officials in competitive districts anxious about every vote versus representatives in “safe seats” who are not afraid to cast votes.

BUDGET

- The good news is that both January & February revenues are up over projection to the tune of about \$2.1 billion. The state’s finances are rebounding. If revenue keeps growing, it may offset the Governor’s billions he was counting on from the federal government. He expected \$7 billion but we will only receive about \$3 or \$4 billion.
- There is the fear, however, that if this trajectory does not continue, next year’s budget will be worse without the temporary \$11 billion in tax revenues (increases) which will sunset in 2012.

Memorable Quotes:

- “Pat Bates is great. She’s a little Hoover Commission” – Jim Mayer
- “We’re 110% committed to reforming CA governance” – Jim Mayer
- “Let’s face it. We have a volatile revenue system – which in & of itself is not a bad thing” – Jim Mayer
- “Meg Whitman won’t care if she upsets the old boys club of the legislature – she’s a real woman!” – anonymous