

CUCPTSA Legislative Team Meeting with State Senator Mark Wyland

Monday, October 26, 2009 – 12:30 p.m.
27126-A Paseo Espada, Suite 1621, San Juan Capistrano. CA 92675

Report by: Kathy Fischer

ATTENDEES:

CUCPTSA Legislative Representatives: Kim Anderson, Lori Abbott, Julie Redmond, Kathy Spencer, Kathy Fischer, Erin Kutnick, Marilyn Amato

Dr. Bobbie Mahler, Interim Superintendent-CUSD
Mike Winsten, Trustee-CUSD

We met with Senator Mark Wyland and his district representative, Heather Baez, for over one hour. Highlights of the meeting are as follows...

- Ø The economy and state budget are in such bad shape that it presents an opportunity for reform. The senator would like to see major changes in how the legislature conducts business.
- Ø Sen. Wyland is hopeful that some bi-partisan governance reforms will come about as a result of the newly formed Joint Select Committee on Reform, of which he is a member.
- Ø The senator feels the most important priority in reform is to “solve the problem of time.” That is his biggest frustration – the lack of time to study bills, hear testimony, meet constituents and find solutions.
- Ø He was very impressed with the testimony of Treasurer Bill Lockyer to the Legislature’s Select Committee on Improving State Government on 10/22. Watch Lockyer’s comments at www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw4rCntRoxo.
- Ø Sen. Wyland agrees with Lockyer that there are far too many bills introduced into the legislature. He sees a need to cut down on the bills – 2000 are introduced in each session. They are time consuming and, in many cases, not very necessary. However, that is what legislators do – sponsor bills.
- Ø We discussed the activities and suggestions of Bay Area Council and California Forward. The senator likes some of the proposals from California Forward such as “pay-as-you-go” (programs tied to revenue sources), two-year budgets, and performance-based budgets.

- Ø The idea of a part-time legislature does not solve the “time issue” unless there is a limit on the time senators and assembly members spend in Sacramento and, instead, have more time in their districts.
- Ø Sen. Wyland’s bill, SCA 2, calls for a two-year session with one year devoted to budget and the other year devoted to other legislation. He also is working on legislation with senators Wolk and Huff on performance based budgets.
- Ø Additional tax increases are extremely unlikely. The better goal is to “grow the pie” through expanding business opportunities in California such as alternative energy and biotechnology. If the economy expands, the state’s revenues grow increasing the “size of the pie” that gets distributed to government services and programs including education.
- Ø Wyland would like to see the unions (including CTA) step up to influence Democrats to help improve the state’s business climate. He finds businesses are talking more and more about leaving California. “Labor has to help grow the pie”.
- Ø We discussed the budget difficulties for school districts with budget cuts taken and more still potentially on the horizon. He agreed that delaying payments to districts is a real problem.
- Ø He would like to see pressure placed on the Federal government to pay its full share of IDEA and speed up the payment of stimulus dollars.
- Ø We discussed that trust of the legislature is lacking among voters. People cannot see where and how their tax dollars are being spent. It’s a challenging time for the representatives in Sacramento. He would like to see legislative involvement in the budget process beyond the “Big 5”. He has proposed that all members sit on the budget committee and work on the budget.
- Ø Sen. Wyland supports Julia Brownley and her efforts in school finance reform. However, it is difficult for him, and other Republicans, to initiate any school finance reform legislation of their own due to cuts in their personnel resources. He, along with other Republicans, has less staff to work on issues yet he serves on seven committees. Sen. Wyland has resigned from some of his committees due to limited staff and time.