TRUE POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE POSITION

January 9, 2014

Purpose:
The purpose of this paper is to announce the position the TRUE Political Action Committee will be recommending to our governing body, the Site Representative Council, on January 21, 2014. This paper is the official position of the union at this time.

Process for Recommendation:
The TRUE Political Action Committee Bylaws state there are two ways a prospective School Board candidate can be endorsed by TRUE:
1. An incumbent can be unilaterally recommended by a majority vote of our Site Representative Council.
2. Through an interview process whereby all interested parties would be given the opportunity to fill out a questionnaire and interview with the TRUE PAC. After the interview, a recommendation would be delivered to the TRUE Executive Board and then presented to the TRUE Site Representative Council.

Recommendation:
The official recommendation of the TRUE PAC is a neutral position in Twin Rivers Areas 4 and 6.

After many, many hours of deliberation and intense, scholarly discussion, the interview team deemed it was in the best interest of TRUE to take a “no position” in Areas 4 and 6.

John Dexter, candidate for Area 2, was endorsed in November of 2013 by a vote from our Site Representative Council. This is acceptable per our Bylaws as one of two ways a candidate can be recommended by TRUE.

The TRUE Candidate Interview Team was made up of 8 teacher members. The members were diverse in their teaching assignments in that there were 3 Special Education teachers, 2 Learning Coaches, 1 K-6 teacher and 1 Secondary teacher. This was a very strong Committee.

Dr. Kj Rhoads
TRUE PAC Chair
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Monday, January 13th, 2014

On Monday, January 6th, the Site Representative Council approved the Tentative Agreement (TA) for the 2012-2013 school year to go to the members to vote. The negotiations for this agreement began in the Fall of 2012, when the increase of monies to public education had not happened yet. Due to the district being in disorder, these negotiations lasted up until December of 2013, and caused negotiations for our current year, 2013-14 to be behind. For the current year 2013-2014 re-opened articles, TRUE will be going back to the table the first week of February. The message from TRUE Leadership and the Negotiations Team is we will fight for a raise for the current school year, retroactive to August 2013.

The TRUE Political Action Committee completed their candidate interviews and made its recommendation for the three open seats on the TRUSD School Board. As we begin to gear up for the June election, I feel we will see an increase of publicity of our District by the media. We have a long way to go in this District before things will be right, but I do feel we are on the right track. If the District was not, I would be the first to let you know. If you do not think the District is moving forward, then I hope you will be the first to let me know. I am not looking forward to what the politics of our School Board election will bring, but I will not back down from doing what is right for the teachers, students and families of our District.

TRUE Leadership continues its ongoing collaboration with the Educational Services Department. We are encouraged that the new leadership in this department is seeking and listening to our input.

Site Visits are continuing by TRUE’s Executive Board. If you would like an Officer or Executive Board member to visit your site, please contact the TRUE Office. Site visits often bring to light concerns that had not been shared in the past and should have been.

If you have not yet given or updated your personal email to TRUE, please do so. Many communications go out through email weekly. As TRUE’s Negotiations Team goes back to the table, you will want to be informed of what support you can give our Team when that time comes.

Kristin Finney
TRUE President

ELECTIONS UPDATE

The TRUE Elections Committee is currently holding a vote for the Tentative Agreement Contract for the 2012-2013 re-openers. Voting will take place at the sites from January 13, 2014 to January 23, 2014. Ballots must be returned to the TRUE office by 4:00pm on Thursday, January 23rd. Ballots will be counted on January 23rd and results will be posted by Friday, January 24, 2014.

There are several upcoming TRUE Elections – the first being for the NEA Representative Assembly (RA). The Representative Assembly is the primary legislative and policy making body of the NEA. The Representative Assembly adopts the strategic plan and budget, resolutions, the Legislative Program, and other policies of the NEA. This year’s RA will be held in Denver, Colorado. Delegates will need to arrive on Monday, June 30, 2014 and depart on Monday, July 7, 2014. TRUE members have two ways of being elected – as a State Delegate or a Local Delegate. The Declaration of Candidacy forms are available for the State Delegate Election on the TRUE Website or the back page of the CTA magazine, and are due to CTA by 5:00 p.m. on January 31st. TRUE Elections Committee will be drafting a timeline for the Local Delegate position soon. Look to the TRUE website early February for more information.

At the time this update was written, the TRUE Elections Committee was still waiting for news from CTA with regards to the TRUE President Election Challenge. We are hoping to hear from CTA sometime this month. If another election is required, a timeline will be developed.

Julianne Neal
TRUE Elections Committee Chairperson
NEGOTIATIONS NEWS

Paul LeFrancois has joined the Negotiations Team as our newest team member. He is the Negotiations Committee Chairperson. Paul brings a wealth of experience and knowledge back to the team and we are very excited to have him working with us again!

Thank you to all of the members who took the time to participate in our negotiations survey. We received responses from 443 members and will utilize those responses, along with feedback we have received from members via Negotiations Committee meetings and site visits, to guide negotiations. Negotiations are scheduled to start in early February. We will first negotiate for the current year (2013-2014) focusing only on salary and benefits. Once we have a Tentative Agreement in those areas for the current year, we will then be able to work on our next 3-year contract (July 1, 2014- June 30, 2017).

Key issues identified as most important to the members who completed the survey were class size, prep time, and additional support services for our students. As for salary and benefits, 49% of those who answered would like to see any new money put toward a combination of both salary and benefits, while 38% chose salary only and 13% chose health benefits only. 72% of members felt that the current system of evaluation does an accurate and fair job of assessing and improving their skills as teachers. As for what support systems could be put in place for those who receive an unsatisfactory mark on an evaluation, assigning mentor teachers and Peer Assistance and Review were the top vote getters.

Again, thank you to everyone who took the time to fill out the survey, attended Negotiations Committee meetings, or gave input at site visits. As always if you have any input for the team, please email the TRUE office at true.office@yahoo.com.

Chris Moran
TRUE Lead Negotiator

ORGANIZING

The TRUE Organizing Committee is currently holding TRUE Listening Sessions at all sites. Throughout the school year, members of the Organizing Committee or TRUE Executive Board will be visiting school sites to listen to members’ concerns. We are continuing our work to finish sorting the data from last year's Community Conversations. A report of the findings from the three conversations will be available and presented to members and the School Board this March.

The Organizing Committee is looking for volunteers to join our team. We will be planning events to support Contract Negotiations for the 2013-2014 school year, supporting the TRUE PAC during the Twin Rivers School Board elections, and continued Community Outreach. Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 30, 2014 at the TRUE Office.

Julieanne Neal
TRUE Organizing Chairperson

2013 TAXES

For those members that itemize your deductions, you’re allowed to deduct your Association dues.

The actual amounts are indicated on your December paystub. You must add CTA/NEA Dues and TRUE Dues, Year-To-Date amounts.

You can also see the Membership Dues Structure on the TRUE Website at www.trueassociation.org.

January - June 2013 (6 months) from the 2012-13 Structure

August - December 2013 (4 months) from the 2013-14 Structure
The Negotiation Committee held a meeting before Thanksgiving to hear members concerns. Salary and benefits were major concerns, but other contractual issues were discussed as well. Class sizes including case loads for specialty groups and Science courses were brought to the attention of the committee. A number of problems within Special Education were talked about and time for IEP’s continues to be problematic at many sites. While there were improvements with the Early Childhood Education language during the recent negotiations, a few other ECE needs were discussed during the meeting.

Grievances were also discussed during the meeting and clarification language is needed in a number of articles. Everything from the Negotiation Committee meeting was shared with the Negotiations Team recently. If you feel there is an area of the Contract that has been overlooked, please email me at lefrancoisl@earthlink.net.

Paul Le Francois  
TRUE Negotiations Committee Chairperson

CTA SCHOLARSHIPS

GO TO WWW.CTA.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS  
CTA OFFERS SEVERAL DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS TO MEMBERS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS THROUGHOUT THE ACADEMIC YEAR. LISTED BELOW ARE THE MAJOR CTA SCHOLARSHIPS:

CTA Scholarship For Dependent Children
This program based on academic achievement provides up to 35 scholarships in the amount of $5,000 each to dependent children of active, retired or deceased CTA members. In addition, the highest-scoring applicant is awarded the Ralph J. Flynn Memorial Scholarship.

- Evaluation of Applications
- Guidelines for Letter of Recommendations
- Instructions (must read before starting application)
- Application | Brochure | **Deadline:** February 7, 2014

D. A. Weber Scholarship for Dependent Children Attending Continuation High School/Alternative Programs
CTA offers one scholarship in the amount of $5,000 to a dependent child of an "active," retired or deceased CTA member who is attending or attended a continuation high school or an alternative education program.

- Evaluation of Applications
- Guidelines for Letter of Recommendations
- Instructions (must read before starting application)
- Application | **Deadline:** February 7, 2014

CTA Scholarship For Members
This program offers up to 5 scholarships in the amount of $3,000 to current "active" CTA members completing college coursework.

- Evaluation of Applications
- Guidelines for Letter of Recommendations
- Instructions (must read before starting application)
- Application | **Deadline:** February 7, 2014

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship
This CTA scholarship is given in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to aid members of ethnic minorities in preparation of teaching related careers in public education. Applicant must be an "active" CTA member, a Student CTA member or a dependent of a CTA member.

- Criteria
- Guidelines for Letter of Recommendations
- Instructions (must read before starting application)
- Application | Brochure | **Deadline:** February 21, 2014
As the fiscal crisis deepens in California and throughout the nation, teachers and other public employees have increasingly been scapegoated as a large part of the problem — specifically because they have earned pensions as part of their compensation package. It’s time to set the record straight.

The economic collapse is the result of many factors, including the subprime mortgage crisis, Wall Street banking scandals, the deregulation of financial institutions, high corporate and consumer debt levels, a high unemployment level, and unbridled corporate greed. It is an epic global crisis, and it affects all of us. It was not caused by middle-income teachers and education support professionals who worked hard and contributed part of their pay toward their pension throughout the years so they could live modestly during their retirement. It was caused largely by Wall Street bankers, who, instead of going to prison, continue to receive outrageous pay raises and $100 million bonuses.

In California, most educators belong to the California State Teachers’ Retirement System (CalSTRS), the second-largest public retirement fund in the country. The retirement fund is not a taxpayer giveaway, as critics have charged. Over the span of their careers, CalSTRS members contribute 8 percent of their monthly pay to help finance their retirement. Employers kick in an equal 8.25 percent of monthly pay, the state contributes a little more than 2 percent (which previously was 4.7 percent but was reduced a decade ago, saving the state over $3 billion), and the returns garnered by CalSTRS investments do the rest.

Unlike most workers, educators in California do not earn any Social Security benefits, and teachers who previously worked in the private sector often see their Social Security benefits reduced or eliminated from federal Social Security offsets, despite the fact that they paid into the Social Security system.

Teachers’ retirement benefits, secured over nearly three decades of service, replace about 62 percent of their working income. As such, the CalSTRS pension represents the only source of reliable monthly income a retired teacher receives. In addition, most public school educators in the state retire without employer-sponsored health care after age 65.

Teachers are not the only ones to gain from having a secure retirement. California gains as well. Here’s why:

- Retiree spending from CalSTRS and CalPERS, the California Public Employee’s Retirement System, benefits create more than $34.5 billion in economic output for the state each year.
- As recently as 2007, almost 61,000 jobs were created due to the economic activity of retirement benefit plans.
- Each $1 in taxpayer contributions to California’s state and local pension plans creates $7.91 in total economic output for the state.
- Defined benefit payments to retired educators have been a powerful economic engine in California’s 58 counties and have a trickle-down effect on the local, state and national economies as well.

Without question, CalSTRS, like pension funds worldwide, has taken a hit due to the global recession, but it is not bankrupt, nor will it bankrupt the state. CalSTRS has historically been a sound system, and until the market collapse had consistently met or exceeded its assumed rate of return. Even under current economic conditions, CalSTRS is 71 percent funded and has sufficient assets and projected contributions to pay benefits until 2045.

Why the attack on public employee pensions? Who really benefits by their elimination? Again, the answer is Wall Street and those who seek to undermine the middle class. The elimination of public pension systems would be a huge boon for financial planners and companies that stand to invest that money while making profit off of the fees they can charge each individual. But Wall Street will also gain in an even bigger way. Institutional investors, like CalSTRS, have been the biggest champions of executive compensation reform and regulatory reform of the financial industry. Without institutional investors, no one would be keeping watch over bad corporate behavior, and there would be no guarantee that the money would go back into the state and national economies as it does now.

Some critics claim that CalSTRS is heading toward insolvency, and therefore should be eliminated. Although it is true that CalSTRS has a $56 billion shortfall, this does not have to be paid overnight. Like a mortgage, this is an amount that will need to be closed over a 30-year period. The shortfall has to be addressed, and teachers are committed to partnering with CalSTRS in finding a long-term funding solution, as they have since the system’s inception in 1913.

All Californians should have a safe and secure retirement system, just like teachers and other public servants. The real problem is not that teachers, firefighters and other public servants have defined benefit plans, but that many private-sector workers do not. That’s because the private sector systemically eliminated defined benefit pension plans in favor of risky 401(k) plans to reduce costs to corporate America at the expense of the American worker.

Instead of attacking teachers over their modest retirement benefits, we should be having discussions about how to create better retirement options for everyone. Eliminating the retirement options for teachers and public employees will not add to anyone’s retirement security and will not balance the state budget.

Source: www.cta.org
NEA NEWS

Senate passes bipartisan budget bill
The Senate approved the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 that was first approved in the House by a wide margin. The bill was crafted by House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Senate Budget Committee chairman Patty Murray (D-WA) to partially roll back the sequester of discretionary spending scheduled for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 and to increase discretionary spending caps for those two years. Under the agreement, $63 billion in spending authority would be restored while $85 billion in cuts to mandatory programs and non-tax revenue increases would net $23 billion in deficit reduction. Discretionary caps would be increased by $45 billion in 2014 and $18 billion in 2015 (split evenly between defense and non-defense in both years). One of the bill’s spending offsets would require new federal employees, such as educators at Department of Defense schools who serve the children of our men and women in the military, to pay 1.3 percentage points more toward their retirement plans. The action now moves to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. The Chairs will allocate the spending levels agreed to in the Bipartisan Budget Act among their subcommittees, including the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee. From there the subcommittees will determine spending levels for specific programs, including those of the U.S. Department of Education as well as related programs, such as Head Start. Appropriators have until January 15, 2014 to complete action before the continuing resolution currently funding the government expires.

Study: public schools outperform private schools
A new book, The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools, provides evidence of the educational strength of public schools relative to private schools in math education. Writing in the Washington Post about the book, authors Christopher and Sarah Lubienski said their review of two nationally representative data sets demonstrate that “once we account for the fact that private schools serve families with more advantages associated with academic success - things like money and highly-educated parents - we find that public elementary schools are, on average, simply more effective at teaching mathematics." The Lubienskis, professors at the College of Education at the University of Illinois, provide more insights on their study in an NEA Today interview.

ED says new high school graduation data encouraging
ED released preliminary data on the second year (2011-2012) of state high school graduation rates based on a common metric. In a blog post on the data, ED said that “16 states reported graduation rates at or above 85 percent, compared to only nine states who reported the same graduation rates in 2010-2011—indicating a small but encouraging sign of improvement." ED added that a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) study looking at 2010-11 and 2011-12 data would be released in early 2014.

MEMBER BENEFITS

Through CTA you can save 15% at over 5,800 participating Choice Hotels Worldwide: Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality, Sleep Inn, Clarion, MainStay Suites, Suburban Extended Stay Hotel, Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inn, brand hotels and Ascend Collection properties. Enroll in the Choice Privileges rewards program to accumulate points toward free room nights, airline miles and more. Go to www.choiceprivileges.com/signup/TSASMISI to sign up today.

Go to www.choicehotels.com or call 800-258-2847. Book in advance, reference TSA Special Rate Identification #00224300 and Choice Privileges member number to save & earn points.

TSA also offers discounts on a majority of entertainment tickets. Such as to Regal, United Artists, and AMC movie theaters. Call 800-537-8491 for more information and to order tickets.
SCHOOL REFORM:
HOW DOES IT RELATE TO YOUR WORK CONDITIONS?

Source: Region 2 Leadership Conference - CTA Presenter: Chuck King, San Jose

We are currently entering a new phase in public education with Common Core Standards changing Standardized Test expectations, and most stakeholders agreeing that there are problems within the public education system. Change usually comes in the form of School Reform, and that change is either Genuine or Faux. Reforms that are typically labeled as Faux Reforms often seek scapegoats to blame for a “failing” system, and rely on either the “Bad Teacher” or “Big Government” narrative to prove their point. The solutions are one size fits all, and to push for privatization as the alternative. Whereas Genuine Reform engages all of the stakeholders within the community while holding those stakeholders accountable for their roles. Genuine Reform must give flexibility so new ideas can grow.

Current educational reforms trends across the country that relate to our work conditions are Threats to Due Process Rights (CA, NV, FL, NJ), Parent Trigger Laws/ Parent Take-overs (CA, NV, FL, LA, MI), Right to Work Laws (Prop 32 only 17 states do not have some form of this law) along with laws that reduce Bargaining Capacity (also tied to Prop 32). Growing threats across the country are Dues Collection and Pensions. The threat to Dues collection is a major concern for locals because it further complicates the Dues Collection Process. As for pensions STRS/PERS is one of the biggest investors in the world, the pension plans of CA teachers do not encumber the state’s budget. Some of the major players challenging Bargaining Rights are social Conservatives (Cato Institute and Heritage Foundation), Libertarians (Americans For Tax Reform) and Profiteers (Testing Inc/ American College Testing and Pearson Evaluation).

Chuck King provided three examples of Faux Reformers that are currently trying to impact how CA teachers teach: Gloria Romero’s Democrats for Education Reform (www.dfer.org), Eli Broad’s Broad Foundation (www.broadfoundation.org), and Michelle Rhee’s Students First (www.studentsfirst.org). The typical agenda for these reformers are one or more of the following; Local control/ state sovereignty, to create competition with a free market solution, shrink government oversight, and eliminate organized labor by suggesting unions protect bad teachers, create inefficiencies, and cause costs to be higher. Prop 32 was not the first time we’ve had to fight to protect our rights, and sadly it won’t be the last time we will have to stand united, educate the public, and fight the influx of in-state and out of state money.

Lisa Gant
TRUE Director-At-Large
JANUARY & FEBRUARY DATES TO REMEMBER

January 21 ~ Site Rep Council Meeting, 4pm at CTA
January 22 ~ TRUSD School Board Meeting
January 23 ~ Ballots due for TA Ratification, 4pm at TRUE
January 24-26 ~ CTA State Council
January 30 ~ Organizing Meeting, 4pm at TRUE
February 4 ~ TRUSD School Board Meeting
February 6 ~ Professional Development Committee Meeting, 4pm at TRUE
February 11 ~ TRUE Executive Board Meeting
February 14 ~ Professional Development Day, non-student
February 17-21 ~ Presidents’ Holiday Week—-No School
February 25 ~ TRUSD School Board Meeting
February 28-March 1 ~ CARS+ Convention
February 28-March 2 ~ CTA Equity & Human Rights Conference