

# DEAN E. VOGEL COUNCIL SPEECH

CTA State Council  
January 26, 2013

## **Election Victory**

Well ...We did it!

I know I said that in November, but I'm saying it again here with you. *WE DID IT!*

The election in November was a huge victory for our students, for public education, and for our state.

We had a number of incredible wins at the local, state and federal level. It's important for us to take time to recognize them and celebrate them.

And to celebrate each other.

And that's exactly what we're going to do tomorrow ... with a few very special guests – including the Governor.

Faced with attacks on our rights as union members, our rights to be involved in politics and the threat of deeper budget cuts, you stepped up and took on the challenge.

You took to the streets, to the phones, to social media, and you organized in your local chapters and communities. And it paid off.

Up against corporate billionaires, we stood arm in arm with fellow union members, and shoulder to shoulder we formed a strong line against special interests seeking special exemptions.

We not only beat them for a third time, as they tried to dismantle labor unions in this state, we beat them bad.

Fifth seven percent of Californians rejected Proposition 32.

We sent a clear message to corporate billionaires ... that they weren't as special as they thought.

One of the most impressive victories came with the passage of Proposition 30, an initiative we helped the governor put on the ballot.

It was looking pretty dicey just a few weeks before the election, but with your hard work back in your communities, we were able to stop another \$6 billion in cuts to our schools and colleges.

This was a historical victory.

When everyone said it couldn't be done, Californians voted to raise taxes.

It means an additional \$47 billion to help schools, colleges and other essential services over the next seven years. We have been talking about the need for more revenue in this state since at least 2008.

Prop. 30 certainly doesn't solve all our funding problems, but it's a great first step.

It makes all the rallies and protests worth it. All the headache. And it shows what we can accomplish together.

And now the Legislature can begin paying back the money owed to public education.

### **Governor's Budget**

That's exactly what the state budget Gov. Brown proposed earlier this month does.

The Prop 98 guarantee in his budget is \$56 billion. This includes an increase in funding for K-12 schools and community colleges by \$2.7 billion next year.

It pays back nearly \$2 billion owed in deferrals. And it increases both the CSU and the UC systems by about \$250 million each – preventing more tuition hikes.

Yes, this is a very good start to the new year.

The governor also wants to revamp California's K-12 funding system. Under what he's calling a "Local Control Formula" ... most categorical programs would be eliminated and that money consolidated into a base grant based on Average Daily Attendance.

Then additional grants would be offered based on the number of English learners and economically disadvantaged students.

This new formula would be phased in over seven years but at this time it's not clear how that phase-in would work.

It's important to remember, however, that this is still just a proposal, and we'll be analyzing it more closely this weekend.

Yes, the Financing Public Education Committee is going to have a lot to talk about.

But I'm encouraged by Governor Brown's views of public education and his vision for California that he shared in his [State of the State address](#) two days ago.

He's challenging Californians to think. Here's a quote from his speech on Thursday morning:

*"We seem to think that education is a thing—like a vaccine—that can be designed from afar and simply injected into our children."*

But, as Irish poet, William Butler Yeats said, "*Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.*"

That's the Governor of the State of California talking like you and me.

And federal mandates devised by bureaucrats who have never stepped into your classrooms or your communities are not lighting fires, they are extinguishing them.

And when addressing the critical question of what should be taught and how it should be taught and how it should be measured, our Governor's prescription is direct and to the point.

And again I quote, "*I would prefer to trust our teachers who are in the classroom each day, doing the real work — lighting fires in young minds.*"

He knows that our students are each different in their own right and have unique needs.

He said it quite profoundly; I believe with this, *“Equal treatment for children in unequal situations is not justice.”*

Yes, our Governor is ready to lead a transformation, and that could be just what we've been waiting for.

### **150th Anniversary**

In addition to feeling proud about our recent election victory, we have another milestone to celebrate—CTA turns 150 this year.

And honestly, we look fabulous for our age.

For the English teachers and vocabulary buffs in the room this is our ses·qui·cen·ten·ni·al [ses-kwi-sen-ten-ee-uh-l] ... which is just a fancy word for our 150th anniversary.

In 1863, the same year President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, John Swett, the fourth superintendent of public instruction convened a teachers' institute that was to become the California Teachers Association. Four years later, as he was leaving office, he delivered a farewell speech in which he reflected on his dreams for public education.

Listen to what he said:

*“It was my hope, for many years that, in this new State, teaching might aspire to the dignity of a profession; that teachers might learn to combine their strength, respect themselves, command the respect of others, and honor their occupation. I have lived already to see the promise of the future.*

*It has been and is my highest ambition to elevate the profession of teaching; for I well know that in no other way can the public schools be made the great educators of the State and the nation. If the citizens of this state desire to have good schools, they must pay professionally trained teachers high salaries. If they want talent, they must buy it.”*

How prophetic is that? Almost 150 years ago. It's exactly what we're talking about today: educators leading their profession. You can see where we get it, can't you?

Since the time of John Swett, CTA has been at the forefront of every positive change in public education in California.

From achieving free public schools for all children in 1866, to leading the charge to establish Community Colleges in 1911, to winning the right to collectively bargain in 1975, to defeating a dangerous school voucher initiative in 1993, to stopping billionaire businessmen from taking away our right to be involved in politics—CTA has been unwavering in its advocacy of public education.

We've also been unwavering in our support for civil rights and social justice. It was CTA that fought for educating African American, Latino and immigrant children. It was CTA that opposed the Japanese internment.

And it was CTA that changed the law to allow women to keep their teaching jobs when they got pregnant. And this is just a little dip into our archives.

We've got a committee of members and staff that has been planning a year of awareness and recognition. So you can expect to see more and hear more soon about our 150th anniversary and how we can all play a role in honoring our history.

Speaking of archives, we have a table set up outside this ballroom where you can check out items from the CTA history vault. We've also created a commemorative logo—as you see behind me. You can even stock up on commemorative items at the Council boutique.

We have so much to be proud of, and so, this year, we are going to take some time to learn more about our past and to celebrate our rich history. But, as my new friend Keith Reding told me recently, “*You don't teach history, you learn from it.*”

## **Strategic Planning**

For nearly 2 years, there have been discussions at all levels of CTA regarding the need to look at our organization; review goals, structures and current practices; and develop a long-term strategic plan.

This strategic planning process—titled “*Your Voice. Our Union. Our Future.*”—is about the future of CTA.

The goal:

To make sure CTA is positioned in the best possible way to help all students and educators.

A group of about 50 diverse members and staff called the Strategic Planning Group is leading this process with the help of the Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon.

LERC is nationally recognized for its strategic planning expertise and for its work with labor unions across the country.

We are in good hands. I am pleased to say this work is well under way. We are in the beginning phase of designing our research approach and collecting information from members and staff.

The Strategic Planning Group has divided into internal and external committees.

The internal committee is focused on reaching out members, leaders and staff, while the external committee is focusing on talking to labor, education and other community partners.

We want to ensure we are not only talking to ourselves, but also hearing from other partners about public education and how they view CTA.

We've definitely got our work cut out for us, but it is exciting work and is crucial to building the union we all want for our future. I want to assure you that the process will be very inclusive.

We need to hear from everyone to build a plan from the bottom up. We want take hard look at ourselves. We want to keep what's working, but not be afraid to cast away what's not ... including some of those things we've done for years just because that's the way it was always done.

You will be hearing a lot about this throughout the year.

That's our theme for this strategic planning process and it really says it all. It is YOUR voice that will make the difference. It is OUR union. And we are going to come together to build OUR future. It's the only way we will remain strong and relevant to all our members.

You will have an opportunity to participate in this important work during your committee meetings today. In addition, all members, leaders and staff will be able to give feedback through an online survey.

I'm asking all of you to join in this effort. Take it seriously. Share your thoughts with us and reach out to fellow members in your schools.

We're coming off a great election, but we can't rest there. We must continue to build for the future.

## Inauguration

This has been a week to commemorate, to celebrate and to contemplate.

From the second inauguration of President Barack Obama to the Day of Service for the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to the State of the State by Governor Brown ... to our meeting here today.

There has been much said this week about our country, and where we are going, and what the future holds.

Martin Luther King Jr. was also one to contemplate the future.

You know, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, following one of the most challenging periods of our history – after a summer where young people marching for civil rights were set upon with fire hoses and dogs, when four young girls died in a Birmingham Alabama church bombing, and just after a president was assassinated.

King said many good things in his acceptance speech, one was:

*"I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind."*

I see a common strand running through the events of this week.

We are still in a challenging time, one that includes horrific school shootings, increasing poverty levels, climate change, and a host of ills.

And guess what? We, as educators are involved in all of that. We can't turn away. And we won't. It's not in our nature.

You've heard me say many times ... I know who you are. You step up. That's why it's important to maintain that audacious faith Dr. King talked about.

I'm very optimistic about the future. We have many challenges but we have always risen to meet them as educators, as CTA members, and as citizens, and we'll continue to do so.

This weekend is about making sure we meet them as effectively as possible and that we are doing so in a way that reflects the direction our members want.

I'm grateful to you. I'm grateful that you are all here.

And I thank you for your effort.