

california educator

JANUARY 2025 VOLUME 29 ISSUE 3



New Year's Resolution:

BUILD ON OUR UNION POWER



The Fight to Make Schools Safe
PAGE 16



State Rulings Protect Students, Educators
PAGE 23

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VOLUME 29 ISSUE 3



#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

PAID PREGNANCY LEAVE

Our fight continues for this fundamental right. Spread the word and support Assembly Bill 65. **PAGE 28** [f](#) [x](#) [ig](#) [cta.org/ppl](#)

BLACK HISTORY & LABOR

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LOCAL ORGANIZING GRANTS

CTA program helps chapters succeed, grow strong. **PAGE 35**

DIGITAL

TPA'S: TELL US YOUR STORY

We're collecting stories about ineffective and unnecessary Teaching Performance Assessments to send to the state workgroup considering the issue. Add yours! **PAGE 34** [cta.org/TPAstory](#)

GRANTS FOR GOOD IDEAS

CTA's Institute for Teaching offers grants for strength-based teaching and learning projects and programs. Apply now! **PAGE 11** [cta.org/ift](#)

CALIFORNIA READS

CTA's 2025 list of teacher-vetted books for all grade levels is here. **PAGE 10** [cta.org/careads](#)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GOOD TEACHING CONFERENCE

The essential CTA conferences to level up your skills and connect with experts and peers. GTC-North, Jan. 31-Feb. 2; GTC-South, March 14-16. **#CTAGTC** **PAGE 9** [f](#) [x](#) [ig](#) [yt](#) [s](#) [cta.org/conferences](#)

FOR NEW EDUCATORS

Don't miss CTA's New Educator Weekend, which has all you need to be successful in your first years of teaching. **#CTANEW** **PAGE 9** [f](#) [x](#) [ig](#) [yt](#) [s](#) [cta.org/conferences](#)

MEMBER BENEFITS

SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

Members and their dependents are eligible for financial support and awards throughout the academic year. **PAGE 11** [cta.org/awards](#)

MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS

The Calm app is the perfect antidote to the stresses of everyday life. Activate your free subscription and find relaxation now. **PAGE 43** [CTAMemberBenefits.org/Calm](#)

Artwork by César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program 2023–24 winner Adiline Orozco Lucas; teacher: Viviani Piekutowski, Santa Maria Elementary EA. See page 11.



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Educators fight to defend students and win healthy facilities

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Black History

Martin Luther King Jr. and others' fight for civil and worker Rights

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Images, from top: Oakland Education Assn. members and community speak out at a school board meeting; photo courtesy Rowland Scherman, Wikimedia Commons; photo courtesy Sacramento LGBT Community Center.

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK. We accept signed email and letters; we excerpt user posts from CTA social media platforms and cta.org/educator. Content subject to editing for clarity and space. Photos must have permissions. Opinions expressed by writers are not necessarily those of CTA. Editor@cta.org; [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)

OUR UNION: Protecting All Students, All Educators

Every student has the right to a free public education, regardless of their immigration status. Our union supports a realistic, humane and legal path to citizenship, and stronger labor protections for the millions of aspiring citizens who call America home.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, 133,000 undocumented children between the ages of 3 and 17 years are enrolled in California public schools, and 750,000 K–12 students in California have an undocumented parent. In addition, there are more than 14,000 DACAmented educators working in U.S. public schools.

Today, immigrants face increased hate, danger and vitriol from politicians and extremists who distract and divide us by pointing the finger at new and undocumented immigrants and supporting overly harsh policies that harm all of us and undermine our humanity.

Together, our union is fighting back. “We are prepared to stand up against any attacks on our students, public education, workers’ rights and our broader communities that may come,” said CTA President David Goldberg in his end-of-year message (see below).

California state law protects students and families in our public schools, including:

- **Non-discrimination** — applies to *all* students;
- **Safe school environment** — schools are generally prohibited from voluntarily granting access to campus by immigration enforcement officers, requesting social security numbers or inquiring about citizenship/immigration status of students or parents/guardians;



- **Confidentiality** — schools are prohibited from sharing personal information about students or their family members for immigration enforcement purposes without a court order/judicial subpoena.

In response to the increased threats to California immigrant communities, Attorney General Rob Bonta issued guidance in December to public schools and colleges/universities to protect immigrants’ rights under the law. Find it at oag.ca.gov/publications#immigration.

NEA advises that DACA recipients whose permits expire in 2025 renew now at uscis.gov/archive/renew-your-daca.

CTA will continue to update and share resources on this issue as they are available.



Fighting Forward in the New Year



CTA President David Goldberg wished members a joyous holiday season in a video message, and looked ahead to 2025. While recognizing that many have “mixed emotions” about what is to come, he reminded us that we can build on the power of our union.

“As a union of 310,000 educators, we have the strength to fight for our students, our schools and our communities,” he said. “When we kick off the new year, we’ll be coming together in our union, stronger than ever, to win for our students, our communities and public education.”

Watch the message at youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers. Cheers!

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For our full social media directory, see cta.org/social.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The California Teachers Association exists to protect and promote the well-being of its members; to improve the conditions of teaching and learning; to advance the cause of free, universal and quality public education for all students; to ensure that the human dignity and civil rights of all children, youth and adults are protected; and to secure a more just, equitable and democratic society.

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California Educator is published for the information and edification of CTA members. The editorial philosophy is governed by the policies of CTA. Articles and advertising reflect that philosophy. Letters to the editor may be sent to editor@cta.org.

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2024, to Aug. 31, 2025) are \$1,029, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see cta.org/contribution for details). \$25.53 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities to support state and local candidates and/or initiatives, and \$15.00 of CTA annual dues is designated for independent expenditures, totaling \$40.53 not deductible for income tax purposes. Please consult your tax adviser.

Subscription to the *California Educator* is \$10 per year, available to persons or institutions not eligible for CTA/NEA membership.

CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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Approved by





Our Righteous Fight as Union Educators

AS THIS YEAR comes to an end, I've been reflecting on the work we've done together, and on the road ahead.

I'm also mindful of the privilege and power of having a union in a country where so few workers have a voice at work and where the forces aligned against us are so well funded. I'm grateful to be a member of a union of 310,000 educators committed to the fight for the schools, communities and society we all deserve.

Let me be clear: we will defend our students, public education, and workers' rights against any attack whether at the local, state or national level. We will fight for the future we all deserve!

The recent election results left too many feeling unsafe and vulnerable. This pain is real, and we must acknowledge our hurt, fear and anger. We must also care for ourselves and each other in moments like this. As Audre Lorde said, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."

Care and connection are themselves powerful forms of solidarity. Check in on your colleagues, support students who confide in you, and remember the core of our union: having each other's backs.

We are living in a critical moment for public education. California students and educators need more resources, not less, for students to learn in safe and stable school environments. Educators deserve salaries and benefits that allow us to thrive in the communities we serve. Nationally, special education is criminally underfunded. We need and deserve leaders who understand these issues and will work alongside educators to secure more resources for public schools and protect the institution of public education. Our students and communities deserve no less. This is why we worked so hard to elect public education supporters up and down our state.

During this election cycle we had the highest level of engagement our union has seen, especially in districts where the safety of students has been under attack and where the stability of our schools was at risk.

"Let's remind ourselves of the power and responsibility we have as union educators, let's care for each other, and let's get ready to continue our fight."



Together we knocked on 500,000 doors across the state and though we lost some tough races we also won in places like Hayward, Salinas, Fresno, Sacramento, Stockton, Anderson Valley, Mountain View, Orange, Saddleback, San Diego, Oceanside, Chula Vista and in many other districts. That's five times as many doors as we knocked on in the last election.

I'm proud of every single CTA member and chapter that walked and knocked to win for our students and our public schools!

I won't pretend to know precisely what the road ahead looks like. But I know that it will be challenging and that we, as union educators, will be at the very center of the battles ahead.

And whatever comes, we will be ready. We will build the power of our union through deep organizing,

we will stand in defense of the rights of educators and students, of the need for our schools to be safe places to learn and teach, of the righteous fight that every educator in California deserves to earn a living wage so that we can live in the communities we serve.

In the days and weeks ahead, let's remind ourselves of the power and responsibility we have as union educators, let's care for each other, and after we've had some time to rest, let's get ready to continue our fight.

David B. Goldberg

CTA PRESIDENT



If Not Now, When?

YOU'VE HAD A BABY — congratulations! Now, as an educator, do you rush back to work before fully bonding with your child or fully recovering from childbirth? Or do you burn through accrued sick time and then pay for a substitute teacher — a financial loss that impacts you and your family now and your retirement later?

The lack of paid pregnancy leave forces many educators to make this choice. In California, 73% of the teaching workforce is female. Women who give birth tend to be younger and teachers having children are generally early in their careers, so most will not have enough sick leave to cover their pregnancy. Once out of sick leave, mothers must pay their salary minus the cost of a sub to cover pregnancy-related disabilities, resulting in a 50% pay cut.

“This is a double dose of gender discrimination,” says CTA Secretary-Treasurer and new mother Erika Jones. “Women educators are not only forced to exhaust sick leave early in their careers due to pregnancy, but are also later penalized in retirement, earning an average \$100,000 less than male colleagues.”

It doesn't have to be this way. Our union is sponsoring the **Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act, AB 65** (Aguilar-Curry, D-Winters), which would provide all public school employees with up to 14 weeks of fully paid leave for pregnancy and pregnancy-related health conditions. Read our story on p. 28 — and help pass AB 65.

Our members are always ready to take action when faced with urgent issues. Parents and the community tried to get hazardous conditions at a Richmond elementary school addressed for years when United Teachers of Richmond members organized around the issue last year. UTR recorded mold in classrooms, broken ceiling tiles, inadequate climate control, lack of access to clean drinking water and windows in classrooms that don't open (leading to excessive heat) and filed complaints at the state level. Read “**Organizing for Safe Schools**” (page 16) for other



examples of members and locals defending students and winning healthy facilities.

In addition, our locals have scored huge victories in recent rulings by the California Public Employment Relations Board (PERB). After an extremist-controlled school board adopted an illegal forced-outing policy in 2023, the Rocklin Teachers Professional Assn. organized against it, ultimately filing a complaint with PERB. In June the agency, which oversees collective bargaining and labor relations for public employees, ordered the forced-outing policy to be reversed. PERB also issued rulings favorable to students and educators in Temecula, Sacramento and Clovis; read “**Protecting Our Rights, Defending Our Students**” on page 23.

Our union knows that finding the time to plan, organize and talk with each other about critical issues is challenging. CTA can help local leaders meet this challenge with **planning, site visit and local president release time grants**; see page 35.

The new year brings new opportunity for us to come together and get things done. And yes, the time really is now — we can't afford to wait for change.

As CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones says of AB 65, “We're going to continue the momentum, continue to build and look forward to winning this!”

Katharine Fong

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School Principals (NASSP)**

*"Cynicism is not just harmful,
but often naive. Hope and
trust, by contrast, are wiser
than most people realize.
It gives people a glimpse
of a better world."*

—Jamil Zaki, PhD,
Stanford University

TEACHING STRONGER BRAINS: PROMOTING STUDENT STRENGTHS, CHARACTER, GRATITUDE, HOPE, AND AGENCY IN A DEFICIT-FOCUSED AGE

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2025

Pre-Conference Workshops: February 20

**AT THE HISTORIC FAIRMONT HOTEL, ATOP NOB HILL,
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**The Science of Rewiring Our Brains for Compassion, Optimism,
Gratitude, and Awe**

Dacher J. Keltner, PhD, *University of California, Berkeley*

Autism and Education: Focusing on the Strengths of Neurodiverse Students

Temple Grandin, PhD, *Colorado State University*

Hope for Cynics: The Surprising Science of Human Goodness

Jamil Zaki, PhD, *Stanford University*

Conscience: The Social Brain and Social Learning

Patricia S. Churchland, BPhil, *University of California, San Diego*

The Science of Character: PRIMED for Changing the Character of Schools

Marvin W. Berkowitz, PhD, *University of Missouri-St. Louis*

**How Every Brain Is Different: Celebrating Our
Students' Strengths in Schools**

Chantel S. Prat, PhD, *University of Washington*

Hacking Deficit Thinking: Strategies for Strength-Based Practices

Byron M. McClure, EdD, NCSP, Co-Author, *Hacking Deficit Thinking* (2022)

Hidden Brilliance:

Unlocking the Intelligence, Talents, and Strengths of Autism

Lynn K. Koegel, PhD, CCC-SLP, *Stanford University School of Medicine*

Gratitude in Schools: The Science of Building Character

Giacomo Bono, PhD, *California State University, Dominguez Hills*

**Evolving Learners: Inquiry-Based Strategies to Cultivate
Strengths, Compassion, and Autonomy in a Digital Age**

Lainie J. Rowell, MA, Author, *Evolving With Gratitude* (2022); Co-Author, *Evolving Learner* (2020)

The Power of Student Agency

Anindya Kundu, PhD, *Florida International University*

The Power of Hope in Education

Crystal I. Bryce, PhD, *University of Texas at Tyler*

Register Now to Save!

For more information and a complete list of speakers, visit
LearningAndTheBrain.com or call 857-444-1500 x1 or 2.



January 2025

CALENDAR

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



JAN. 20

Martin Luther King Day

On Jan. 20, 2025, the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday will mark its 30th anniversary as a National Day of Service. While MLK Day became a federal holiday in 1986, Congress designated it as a day of service — a “day on, not a day off” — in 1994. Encourage students to honor Dr. King’s life of service by volunteering to clean and green local parks, pack and deliver food to home-bound neighbors, and more. Find project ideas at Youth Service America (ysa.org/campaigns/mlkday).

Educators can help students learn about Dr. King’s struggle against racial injustice and his significance to American history. A strong advocate for workers’ rights, he believed that the fight for civil rights and the fight for labor rights were inseparable, and that racial equality was linked to economics. Find lesson plans at bit.ly/MLK_lessons (NEA) and bit.ly/PBS_MLK_curriculum (PBS Learning Media).

See our story on Black History Month and the labor movement on page 14.

Fred Korematsu Day JAN. 30

When the United States went to war with Japan in 1941, all people of Japanese ancestry were forced to relocate to prison camps. Fred Korematsu refused to go. He knew that what the government was doing was unfair, but he was jailed and prosecuted. In 1983, Korematsu’s wrongful conviction was overturned and in 1998 he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

California is one of several states that celebrate **Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties** and the Constitution, every Jan. 30. Teach young people about this real-life hero who made our country a fairer place for all Americans; try the book *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* (by Laura Atkins and Stan Yogi) or find classroom resources at korematsuinstitute.org.



Ed Roberts Day JAN. 23

A public school holiday in California, Ed Roberts Day honors the pioneering leader of the disability rights movement. The first student to attend UC Berkeley in a wheelchair, Roberts was the driving force behind the first student-led disability services program in the world and opened the nation’s first Center for Independent Living in Berkeley.

GOOD TEACHING CONFERENCE

MASTER NEW SKILLS and update your expertise at CTA's Good Teaching Conference — North or South. GTC supports excellent teaching and learning practices for classroom teachers via peer-to-peer instruction — and who better to learn from than fellow educators? Workshops focus on curriculum content areas for K–12 teachers; opportunities to network and share ideas with colleagues and experts abound.

GTC-North **JAN. 31-FEB. 2** *Hyatt Regency SFO;*

GTC-South **MARCH 14-16** *Hyatt Regency Orange County.*

Find more information, registration and a letter you can use to show your principal or district the value of attending GTC at cta.org/conferences. GTC-North booking deadline: Jan. 16. **#CTAGTC**



CTA State Gold Awards

JAN. 3, 2025 **NOMINATION DEADLINE**

Given to individuals (including private citizens and public officials) or organizations whose leadership, acts and support have had a positive impact on California public education. Any CTA member may nominate.

► cta.org/awards

CTA Issues Conference

JAN. 17-19, 2025 **CONFERENCE**

Planet Hollywood Las Vegas, Nevada.

Local leaders and activists come together to learn, discuss and strategize so that we can increase our collective voice on issues that matter most in education. Members working in County Office of Education (COE) locals should join a special pre-conference on Jan. 17.

► cta.org/conferences

New Educator Weekend — South

FEB. 21-23, 2025 **CONFERENCE**

Hilton OC, Costa Mesa. NEW is for educators in their first three years in the profession. It has everything you need to be successful in your first years of teaching, including sessions about classroom management, lesson plans and ideas, connecting with your union, student loan forgiveness information, member benefits, project grants and more. ► cta.org/conferences

CTA/NEA Retired Issues Conference

MARCH 6-7, 2025 **CONFERENCE**

Marriott, Santa Clara. Learn how CTA/NEA-Retired is protecting your future and monitoring legislation that affects your benefits. Stay connected, be protected, and enjoy great benefits.

► cta.org/conferences

2025 Equity & Human Rights Conference

MARCH 7-9, 2025 **CONFERENCE**

Marriott, Santa Clara. The 2025 EHR Conference captures the essence of CTA's mission statement: to ensure that the dignity and civil rights of all children, youth and adults are protected and to secure a more equitable and democratic society. Sessions feature such topics as building awareness, capacity building and action. CTA's Human Rights Award winners are celebrated at a gala dinner.

► cta.org/conferences

Spring CUE 2025

MARCH 20-22, 2025 **CONFERENCE**

Palm Springs Convention Center. Cutting-edge tech and teaching techniques are on the agenda. ► cue.org

NEA RA State Delegate Candidacy

JAN. 31, 2025 **FILING DEADLINE**

Candidates for NEA Representative Assembly state delegate must submit a declaration of candidacy by Jan. 31, 2025, at 4 p.m. The 2025 RA will be held July 1-5 in Portland, OR. More details on page 46. ► cta.org/racandidacy

Read more about CTA scholarships, grants and awards on page 11.

2024–2025 TEACHER RECOMMENDED BOOKS



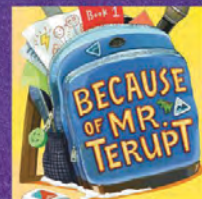
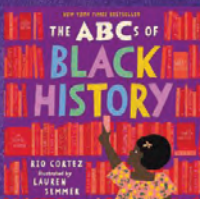
Hot off the press: CTA California Reads 2024–25! These teacher-vetted books for Pre-K–12 will engage students and inspire them all year long. Find book descriptions and links to buy — at a 20% discount — at cta.org/careads.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



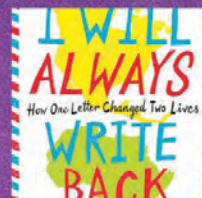
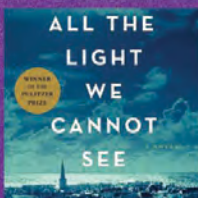
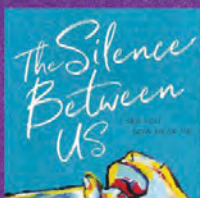
PRIMARY SCHOOL



INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL



MIDDLE SCHOOL



HIGH SCHOOL

CTA Scholarships, Grants and Awards

Our union offers financial support to active CTA members and their dependent children throughout the academic year. Take a look at the list of opportunities below and apply now — visit cta.org/awards for details.

1. CTA Scholarships ► DEADLINE: FEB. 7, 2025

Scholarship funds must be used for education-related expenses only.

• Dependent Children

Offers up to 56 scholarships of up to \$5,000 each to a dependent child of an active member of CTA, CTA/NEA-Retired or a deceased CTA member and is claimed as a dependent on the member's current-year IRS form.

• Dependent Children in Honor of Del A. Weber

Offers one scholarship of up to \$5,000 to a dependent child attending continuation high school/alternative education programs.

• Members

Offers up to 10 scholarships of up to \$3,000 each to active members of CTA (including members working on an emergency credential).

• CTA Aspiring Educators in Honor of L. Gordon Bittle Memorial

Offers up to three scholarships of up to \$5,000 each to active members of CTA Aspiring Educators pursuing a career in public education.

2. CTA Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship

► DEADLINE: FEB. 21, 2025

This program encourages Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students to become educators, school nurses, school counselors or school therapists and to promote professional growth for BIPOC teachers and ESP members.

▼ Artwork by César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program 2023–24 winner Jazmyne Vidrio; teacher: Dr. Jennifer Leipham, East Side Teachers Assn.



3. César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program ► DEADLINE: MARCH 7, 2025

Provides recognition for educators and their students who demonstrate an understanding of the vision and guiding principles embraced by César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta.

4. LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grant & Scholarship Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa

► DEADLINE: MAY 30, 2025

Supports groups, projects and presentations that promote understanding of and respect for LGBTQ+ persons. Also supports self-identified LGBTQ+ active CTA/CTA Aspiring Educators members enrolled in a teacher/counseling credential or graduate program who are pursuing a career in public education and who understand the importance of LGBTQ+ educators as role models.

Questions? Email scholarships@cta.org or humanrightsdept@cta.org.



CTA Institute for Teaching Grants

The **CTA Institute for Teaching (IFT)** is dedicated to supporting strength-based teaching and learning. One way IFT does this is through its annual grant program. Funded by members, the grants assist educators in developing, leading and implementing quality programs and initiatives in their schools, districts and school communities.

All CTA members are eligible to apply for an Educator grant (up to \$5,000) or an Impact grant (up to \$20,000). To date, members have funded 643 grant projects totaling more than \$7.6 million.

Application for the 2025–26 grant cycle is now open; the deadline is March 31, 2025. Visit cta.org/ift for more information and to apply.

COMING UP



FEBRUARY

Black History Month

"African Americans and Labor," the 2025 Black History Month theme, focuses on the various and profound ways that work and working of all kinds — free and unfree — intersect with the collective experiences of Black people. Including organized labor's role in fighting both economic and social injustice, Black people's work has been transformational throughout the United States and the world. For more, visit the Association for the Study of African American Life and History at asalh.org. See our story on Black History Month and the labor movement on page 14.



Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action FEB. 3-7, 2025

Black Lives Matter at School is a national organization struggling for liberation and racial justice in education for Black youth, educators and all youth of color. Through its Week of Action, held every February during Black History Month; Year of Purpose; and Lifetime of Practice, BLM at School addresses racial justice in education by promoting restorative justice, advocating for mental health support, increasing Black teaching staff, ending police presence in schools, and mandating Black history and ethnic studies. Find more information and a curriculum resource guide for all ages at blacklivesmatteratschool.com.



The Great Kindness Challenge Week JAN. 27-31

Empower students to create a culture of kindness on campus with GKC Week, Jan. 27-31 — or any week that's good for your school. GKC is a proactive, positive bullying prevention program that improves school climate and increases student engagement. Using a checklist, students at all grade levels perform as many acts of kindness as possible, from holding the door open for someone to learning to say "hello" in a new language. A multi-week curriculum for students in grades 1-8 is available. Details at thegreatkindnesschallenge.com.

QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peebles**



"In times when I need hope, I think about the students I've visited in classrooms across the country and the teachers that care about them. That's where **hope and our future** lives."

—Secretary of Education **Dr. Miguel Cardona**, on social media



5,457

Number of art teachers needed to be hired by districts to meet demand at California public schools, according to a report commissioned by the Hewlett Foundation's Performing Arts Program.



"Community colleges are no longer America's best-kept secret. ... We're on our way to making them **America's best-kept promise.**"

—First Lady **Jill Biden**, community college professor (and NEA member), on the Biden Administration's focus on investing in community colleges

7.5 MILLION

Number of students nationwide protected by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), about 15% of the student population. Enacted in 1975, IDEA proposed that federal funding cover up to 40% of the cost of programming for students with IEPs. In fact, federal funding covers 14.7%, creating a shortage in the billions.

34

States (and the District of Columbia) where students now have access to a tuition-free community college education.



"It is the job of every teacher, school board member, principal and elected representative in the state of California who believes in public education: It is time for us to **stand up to protect all of these kids.** When we are facing a bully who is targeting our most vulnerable students, we all need to stand up."

—Assemblymember **Al Muratsuchi**, D-Torrance, in November in response to news that the incoming presidential administration would eliminate the U.S. Department of Education

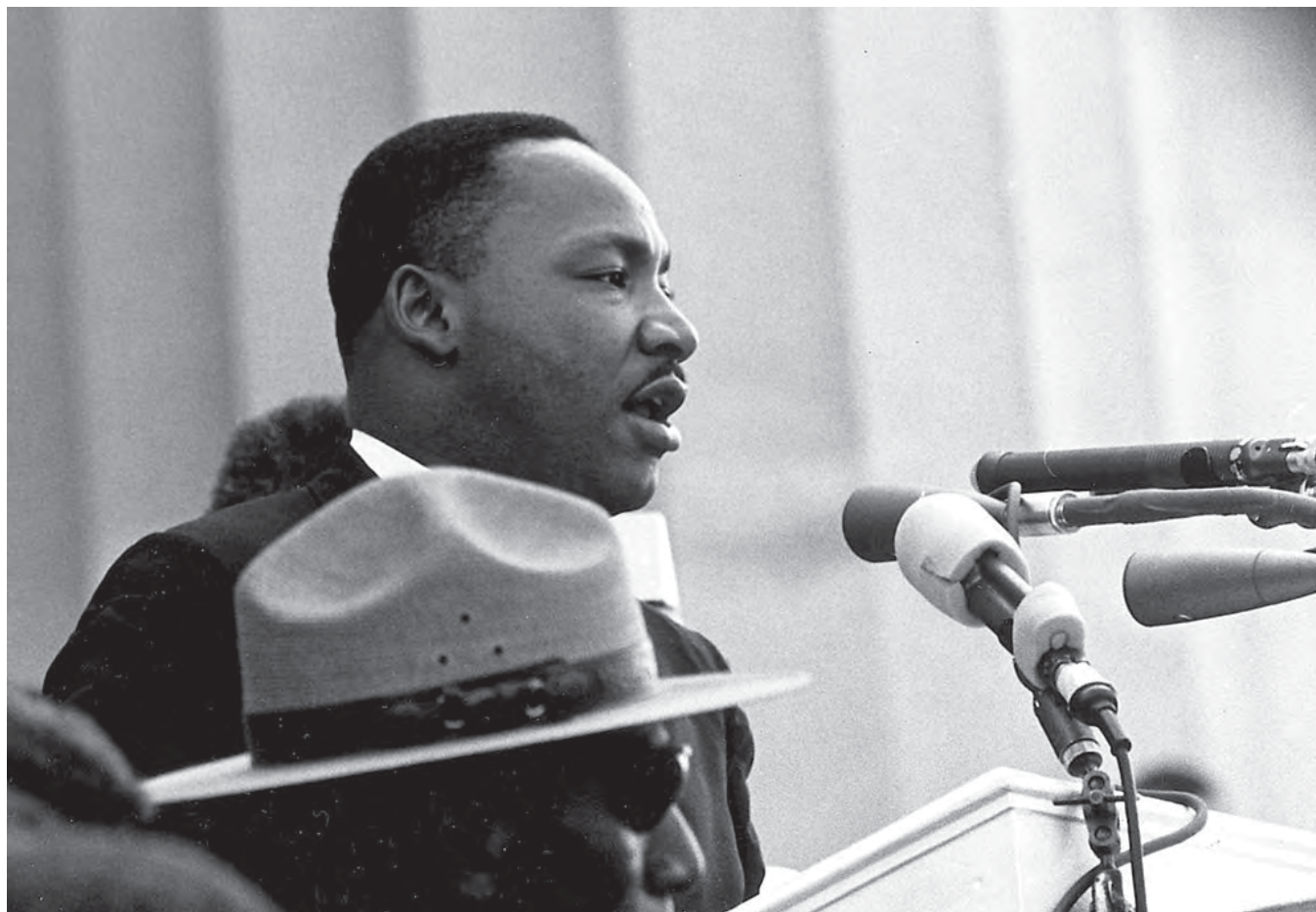


"We are prepared to stand up against any attacks on our students, public education, workers' rights and our broader communities that may come. We're committed to **fight for the future we all deserve.**"

—CTA President **David Goldberg**, on the day after the 2024 Presidential Election

500,000

Number of doors knocked by CTA members statewide during the 2024 election campaign (see page 30).



Rowland Scherman, Wikimedia Commons

THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUITY

Celebrating Dr. King and Others' Fight for Civil and Worker Rights

By Julian Peoples

"What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn't earn enough money to buy a hamburger?"

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 1963

AS WE CELEBRATE Dr. King's birthday on Jan. 20, it's important to acknowledge the historic struggles for civil rights and worker rights that are still relevant today. Dr. King knew that the fight for racial justice and economic justice were intertwined, with Black Americans and other marginalized groups trapped in cycles of poverty due to low wages and poor working conditions.

He believed that fair labor practices and the right to unionize and earn a living wage were essential to achieving true equality.

"The plight of the Negro poor, particularly in the context of urbanization and automation, cannot be solved unless the whole of American society takes a new turn toward greater economic justice," Dr. King said.



Other Prominent Historical Black Labor Leaders



BAYARD RUSTIN:

Chief strategist of the civil rights movement and advisor to Dr. King, who worked closely with AFL-CIO and other unions to promote racial and economic justice.



ELLA BAKER:

Civil rights activist and grassroots organizer who had strong ties to the labor movement, working with the National Negro Congress to support union organizing efforts, particularly those that involved Black workers.



ADDIE WYATT:

One of the first African American women to hold a union leadership role, with the United Packinghouse Workers of America, who fought for gender and racial equality in the workplace. "It is not enough to fight for one group. We must support each other in the struggle for freedom, equality and justice for all people," she said.



C.L. DELLUMS:

President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, who emphasized the need for economic development alongside racial justice, with the struggle for fair labor conditions being essential to achieving social equality.

Dr. King believed unions could help dismantle systemic inequalities by advocating for fair wages, job security and better working conditions, especially for Black workers. During the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike in 1968, he highlighted how poor working conditions and low wages were part of the same oppressive system that perpetuated racial discrimination — recognizing that both the civil rights movement and labor movements faced opposition from similar forces, including politicians and business interests that benefited from maintaining systemic inequality.

"The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress," Dr. King said in a 1965 address to the Illinois AFL-CIO. "Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute, and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life."

The 2025 Black History Month celebration in February includes a focus on the intersection of civil and workers' rights, with the theme of "African Americans and Labor." This includes a focus on prominent Black Labor leaders like A. Philip Randolph and Addie Wyatt, and how their struggles were instrumental in the greater fight against economic and social injustice.

"Justice is never given; it is exacted, and the struggle must be continuous," said Randolph, founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and a key organizer of Dr. King's March on Washington. "For freedom is never a final fact, but a continuing evolving process to higher and higher levels of human, social, economic, political and religious relationship."

Our shared struggles inform our path toward an uncertain future, with the return of President Trump to the White House on Dr. King's birthday. With Project 2025 as the blueprint, the incoming administration is taking aim at equitable education for Black, Brown and other marginalized children across the country. According to the Thurgood Marshall Institute, Project 2025 will dismantle the federal Department of Education, eliminate civil rights protections for students, end HeadStart and universal access to early childhood education, defund our public schools, and restrict access to inclusive, accurate and quality instruction. This after years of concerted efforts by the Koch Brothers and other extremist interests to whitewash history.

"Project 2025 seeks to expand the ongoing, coordinated attack on truth in schools and libraries, which will further deny our nation's shameful legacy of racism," reads a report by the Thurgood Marshall Institute. "It claims that incorporating teachings about systemic racism in school assignments, school activities or teacher education violates the ideals of freedom and opportunity."

As we organize to fight for justice and equity, defend our public schools and protect our students and communities, Dr. King's words continue to light our way.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny," Dr. King wrote in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail. "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

For teaching resources on Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement, visit learningforjustice.org. ■

▼ Auburn Union Teachers Association members demonstrated publicly to let parents know in English and Spanish that their kids didn't have safe drinking water at school.



ORGANIZING FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

Educators fight to defend students and win healthy facilities

By Julian Peebles

"I'VE HEARD OF many teachers and even some students getting sick. They've had to close classrooms down for being unsafe," says Sam Cleare, United Teachers of Richmond (UTR) organizing committee chair. "Students have gotten nosebleeds from the heat. Teachers have fainted. It's unsafe."

Across California, public school facilities are in dire need of maintenance and modernization, impacting teaching and learning conditions and putting students and communities in danger. The average age of our state's more than 10,000 public schools is about 50 years old, with 38% of California children attending schools that don't meet minimum standards — where they are exposed to dangers like asbestos, mold, unsafe drinking water and extreme heat. Union educators are organizing in communities statewide to defend their students and themselves and demand safe and healthy schools and classrooms.

At Stege Elementary School in Richmond, parents and the community tried to get dangerous conditions addressed for years when UTR members started organizing around the issue last year. Educators recorded a long list of hazardous conditions — mold in classrooms, broken ceiling tiles, inadequate climate

control, lack of access to clean drinking water and windows in classrooms that don't open, subjecting educators and students to temperatures exceeding 90 degrees — and filed complaints using the state's Williams Act process, used to ensure districts

provide basic safe and healthy conditions at all public schools (see sidebar, page 19).

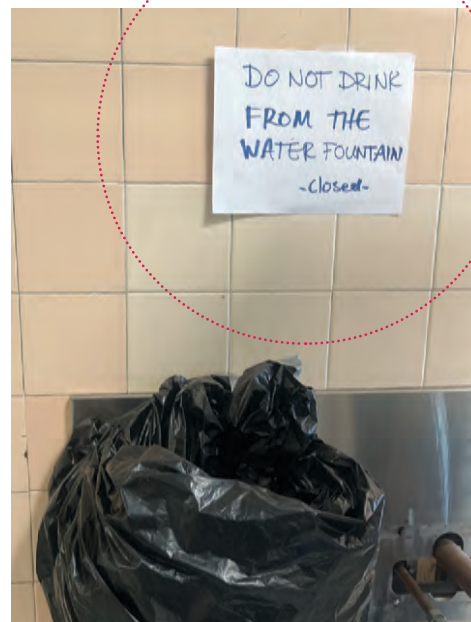
"We collected almost 45 complaints from teachers, staff members, community and families — even some students wrote letters to the school board," says Cleare, who taught at Stege for seven years. "We were strategic in using community events to engage in conversations. My school had a movie night and members of our school leadership, teachers and other staff members were able to talk about the Williams Act and collect complaints."

West Contra Costa Unified School District admin failed to respond to UTR's Williams complaints within the timeline required by law. UTR members began speaking at school board meetings about the hazardous conditions at Stege, attracting the attention of public interest legal group Public Advocates. Public Advocates reached out to UTR leaders to help with the issue, eventually filing a lawsuit against



Sam Cleare

▼ Black mold inside classrooms in Richmond (left) led to one school's temporary closure, while lead rendered water undrinkable in some Oakland public schools.



the district for failing to provide safe conditions for students.

While a judge dismissed the lawsuit, district admin finally sent investigators to Stege over the summer, finding asbestos and other unsafe conditions. Officials abruptly closed the school and temporarily moved all students and staff to a nearby campus, where similar conditions and issues exist, including a lack of access to drinking water for students. UTR leaders and its legal team are currently considering their next moves as the fight continues for the safe and healthy conditions Richmond students deserve.

"We're definitely not done, and I feel like what we do next could create precedent in the state," says Cleare, noting that UTR leaders have visited more than 50 district schools to survey conditions. "Unsafe facilities are impacting our students. Many schools have classrooms where temperatures regularly reach the upper 80s and play areas without shade. Something has to change — it's absolutely unacceptable and illegal."

Fighting for Lead-Free Water in Oakland Schools

"This speaks to decades of disinvestment in public education. We're seeing a very tangible example of this disinvestment, which is the literal poisoning of our students and staff," says Ella Every-Wortman, eighth grade teacher and Oakland Education Association (OEA) site representative. "Our students deserve schools that are safe and racially just."



Ella Every-Wortman

On the first day of school this year at Frick United Academy of Language in Oakland, district officials learned that six water fountains used by students had unsafe levels of lead in the water, prompting the principal to bag all the school's drinking fountains. An eighth grade English teacher at Frick, Every-Wortman says that while this happened in August, the measurements were taken in April, which means that students were exposed to hazardous levels of lead for far longer than necessary.

Every-Wortman, who uses they/them pronouns, says Oakland Unified administrators stepped up testing after OEA pushed for more attention to the matter, with upward of 40 schools testing positive for lead in drinking water — nearly half of the public schools in Oakland. OEA members learned that numerous sites districtwide experienced delays in reporting similar to Frick — meaning that widespread numbers of Oakland public school students were likely exposed to the toxic heavy metal.

"We discovered that they didn't test every water source, so what about the safety of the sources they didn't test?" they ask. "They're still not taking this issue seriously when it's obviously got potential impacts on the health of our students and staff."

Like many schools in urban East San Francisco Bay communities, Oakland has a substantial number of older school facilities that have not been modernized to ensure safety for students and educators. The older pipes and valves have lead



PRO TIPS

for Organizing Around Safe School Facilities

"It needs to be a full community effort. We included family members, students, teacher voice and other staff voice. The more voices you include, the more successful you will be in receiving a response."

—United Teachers of Richmond Organizing Chair **Sam Cleare**

"The Safety Guide from CTA Legal is fantastic and shows your rights through Education Code. If you are aware of what sort of tools you have, it's a lot easier to become safer."

—Santa Maria Joint Union High School District Faculty Association President **Curt Greeley**

"Our biggest allies are our families and community members. It's building those relationships with our community and elected leaders, because when something happens, you can tap into that network and build support for issues in our schools. I found that to be our greatest ally in supporting not only our schools but our community."

—Auburn Union Teachers Association, President **Sara Liebert**

"Stand in your power and know you are on the right side of this fight, no matter what administration is telling you about why something can or can't be done. Know that our students deserve better, that you deserve better and stand strong for what's right."

—Oakland Education Association Site Representative **Ella Every-Wortman**

soldering, which can leach the hazardous metal into the water as they age. OEA continues organizing in school communities and advocating at school board meetings. The district has a plan, but Every-Wortman says it's not fast or proactive enough to ensure student safety, with recently installed water filtration systems proving inadequate for the heavy daily use by hundreds of thirsty students at each school. OEA joined a coalition focused on the issue, Get the Lead Out of Oakland, issuing a list of demands to the district including lowering the acceptable amount of lead in drinking water to zero parts per billion.

"We had some very proactive teachers who were really speaking to the fact that the safest thing right now is to shut off the water sources and wait until we are sure everything is safe," they say. "It's well researched that there's no safe level of lead in the water, especially when we're talking about children."

OEA has filed a grievance on the issue, is considering filing complaints with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and is examining how to address the safety and health issues in bargaining, though they say a short-term solution is needed now. But with an estimated \$60 million cost to modernize all the unsafe schools, Every-Wortman says it's not reasonable for Oakland Unified to have to fix the problem on its own.

"We need more funding and on a state level. We need to push toward a more unified vision of what the standard in public education should be," they say. "We need safe drinking water, and anything that gets us closer to that is what we need to do."

Auburn Teachers Battle District Admin for Safe Water

"Issues like this bring to light that we need to have more in our contracts about climate control and access to water," says Sara Liebert, president of Auburn Union Teachers Association (AUTA). "We actually have to write this in our collective bargaining agreements now and hold our districts accountable because there are a lot of things that are not being taken care of in our schools."

Auburn teachers found themselves fighting for safe drinking water in the heart of Gold Country last year, when lead fixtures contaminated water in classrooms and drinking fountains. The district discovered the lead contamination in schools at the end of the previous school year and made necessary repairs at some sites with a promise to complete the others over summer. Liebert says that didn't happen.

"It was a known fact that this was an issue, and it was supposed to be dealt with before the next school year," the third grade teacher says. "When we started school, the sinks were roped off and there were signs that said 'do not use.' It's Auburn and it gets really hot, so what are we supposed to do with our students?"

▼ Led by president Sara Liebert (front row, third from left), Auburn educators fought the district to get safe drinking water for students.



At first, district admin wasn't providing safe drinking water for students, despite telling the community they were. AUTA started an information campaign in the school community to spread the word to parents and families and rallying to demand action.

"I talked to the superintendent and I wasn't getting anywhere, so we went to the community to let them know their students didn't have access to safe drinking water," Liebert says. "It was a lot of education for our community, starting Facebook pages, making and posting videos, having our members be present, and holding up signs in both English and Spanish saying that we deserve access to clean water."

AUTA also reached out to local media outlets, which spread the story and helped shine a light on the hazardous conditions in Auburn schools. This made for heated school board meetings, where school board members made personal attacks on Liebert and district admin made ridiculous comments, like when they claimed teachers were refusing deliveries of bottled water to the school (there was actually nowhere to store the massive pallets of water the district kept sending).

"We did a lot of picketing, made a lot of signs and organized parents and the community," says Liebert. "After the media got involved, I think the school board felt a lot of pressure about our kids not having access to clean drinking water. Then parents started coming to the meetings and asking questions."

The lead fixtures were finally replaced in November/December 2023 but that wasn't the end of the ordeal — the pipes needed to be flushed for 45 days to ensure all the lead was gone from the system. This meant the water was unsafe to drink until early January, due to prolonged inaction from Auburn Union's school board and administration.

Liebert says it's important to lean into CTA resources and support when fighting for issues like this. While AUTA members organized on the ground, she said day-to-day support from CTA staff was invaluable. ➔

The Williams Act

THE WILLIAMS ACT establishes the following requirements for California public schools:

- **Sufficient instructional materials:** Every student must be provided with the necessary textbooks and instructional materials in core subjects.
- **Qualified teachers:** Schools must employ properly credentialed teachers, particularly in core subjects.
- **Safe and clean facilities:** Schools must maintain facilities that are clean, safe and in good repair, with basic services such as functioning restrooms, clean drinking water and working heating and ventilation systems.
- **Accountability and oversight:** Schools must undergo regular inspections, and every California public school must post and make available complaint forms and procedures to report issues related to these requirements. Complaint forms are also available online at the California Department of Education or by calling (877) 532-2533.

The state law is a response to the 2000 *Williams v. California* lawsuit, which argued that students in many low-income California schools were being denied access to basic educational necessities, including credentialed teachers, adequate textbooks and safe, healthy and well-maintained school facilities. The Williams Act guarantees specific rights for California public school students to promote educational equity.

Contact your CTA staff for support and resources on the Williams Act and other health and safety tools and guidance to support your fight for safe school facilities.

Passage of Prop. 2: Not Enough

IN NOVEMBER, California voters approved Proposition 2, a bond to provide \$10 billion in funding for repairs and upgrades at thousands of K-12 public schools and community colleges. Many districts have already been approved for projects to repair hazardous mold, leaky roofs and septic systems, as well as to build classrooms and replace aging buildings.

But this is not nearly enough. The Public Policy Institute of California estimates that it would cost more than \$100 billion to fix every leaking roof and broken heater on California's campuses. Priority areas for improvement include seismic retrofitting for earthquake safety; plumbing and water system modernizations to ensure safe drinking water; HVAC renovations for air quality and climate control; and electrical and technological infrastructure upgrades.

Continued on Page 20

Continued from Page 19

“It’s that village,” she says. “Yeah, I’m the head of the local, but I have a huge village that’s willing to support us and we wouldn’t be successful without that. It was a team effort.”

Santa Maria Educators Plan Ahead After Power Outages

“I didn’t know the toilets couldn’t flush without power, until I needed to and there was no power,” says Riccardo Magni, a member of Santa Maria Joint Union High School District Faculty Association (SMJUHSDFA).

Organizing to fight for student safety also means being prepared for the unexpected, whether it’s wildfires, unhealthy air, bad weather or power outages. SMJUHSDFA members found themselves dealing with the latter three times in quick succession this year, which spurred the local association to organize around preparedness and force the district to improve its systems.

“We have had in a six-week span all of our comprehensive high schools suffering a debilitating loss of electricity,” says Curt Greeley, president of SMJUHSDFA. “A car hit and took out a power line for one, there was an unexplained PG&E outage for another, and a third lost power when a power line broke. You can’t predict any of that.”

Greeley says educators learned quickly just how electricity-reliant their schools are when the outages killed all communications — no email, telephones, loudspeakers, even the bells. In one of the events, cell phone service also went down (and Greeley says it’s often spotty in some schools anyway), creating a potentially dangerous situation.

“It just really showed us that there were gaps in our technology, and we have to have contingency plans to address them,” says Greeley. “We’re currently working with the district to shore up those gaps.”

At another school, Greeley says they learned during the blackout that the toilets there also ran on electricity, discovering the batteries intended as backups in the event of

CTA Organizing Grants

Local leaders can apply for CTA Organizing Grants to help organize in your chapter and member work, including Site Visit, Planning and Local President Release Time grants. See page 35 for details.



Curt Greeley



Riccardo Magni

an outage were dead. This meant there were 10 working toilets for approximately 3,400 people for more than two hours. Windows at the school are also fixed-closed, and temperatures became sweltering quickly without electric-powered climate control systems.

Magni said the situation was troubling for educators, who had no way of knowing what was happening and no way to contact anyone to find out.

“It was particularly frightening when the phones didn’t work,” says Magni, a science teacher and coach. “Since I have a door to the outside, I would open it and talk to the security guards to find out what was going on. Our administrators were not prepared for this, so it was really unorganized.”

SMJUHSDFA members have taken these experiences and used them to power an organizing campaign to fight for safe and healthy conditions for all. Greeley says they are meeting with district safety committees to share their voices and create the best teaching and learning environment in Santa Maria schools and ensure there’s a well-thought plan in the event of emergency situations.

“We have members who are passionate and knowledgeable and if we could have some inclusive leadership and more perspective on this, we can reach a better answer. This should be a district-led initiative across campuses so that teachers and staff have expectations,” he says. “We’d like to collaborate on what’s best for teachers, students and staff.”

Greeley’s message for CTA local unions fighting for similar health and safety improvements: You are not alone and remember that safety is the foundation for all supportive teaching and learning environments.

“Too often, we get caught up in teaching, learning, assessment and negotiating contracts. Our experiences this year have reminded us what the true mission of our union is — to keep our members safe when our employer can’t or won’t.” ■

"I don't want to be drinking lead. I don't want lead anywhere near me. I want to be safe; I want to grow up safe."

—**Hannah Lau**, 13-year-old Oakland student, in an EdSource story about lead in the drinking water at public schools in Oakland



DRIP, DRIP, DRIP IN THE CLASSROOM



◀ An SJTA campaign in support of Measure R featured Corina Lozano.

▶ Leaky ceilings are not the only safety issue at San Jose schools — SJTA member Jessica Isla-Rutherford recalled a toxic carbon monoxide issue.



CORINA LOZANO TEACHES seventh grade English Language Arts and social studies at Muwekma Ohlone Middle School in San Jose. A member of San Jose Teachers Association, she is also a site rep.

"My classroom has had a ceiling leak for at least 12 years — I've been in it for 11 years, and the year before the previous teacher had to take her kids to the library because of the leak. The leak is at the front of the room. The janitors and I open up plastic garbage bags to put on the carpeting and I have plastic tubs to catch rainwater. Other teachers deal with drips too, especially after a bad storm.

"Each year we put in work orders and send photos and video, and every year district workmen think they find

the source of the leak. But our school is from the 1930s. Water doesn't drain from the flat roofs and seams aren't sealed properly.

"I asked to have my classroom's ceiling tiles removed because of water marks and stains — I want to work in an environment that feels good and is aesthetically pleasing.

"One of my videos of drops falling into a bucket made a recent Spanish-language news broadcast. I'm a big supporter of Measure R [a bond measure passed in November that authorizes \$1.15 billion in school facility improvements]. We need

more than just maintenance; we need a major overhaul of whatever's up there."

"We need more than just maintenance; we need a major overhaul."

—**Corina Lozano**,
San Jose Teachers Assn.

\$3.2 Billion: Schools and the Costs of Extremism

Funds for students' education, vital programming used to respond to political attacks instead

A NEW REPORT has found that the \$3.2 billion school districts spent in 2023–24 on responding to political attacks was “meaningfully impacting the quality of education students received.”

According to the report, with this amount of money “it would be possible to expand the national Free Breakfast program budget by 40% [including additional funding].” Or it could be used to “hire an additional counselor or psychologist for every public high school in the United States” or “to expand access to arts or after-school programs in STEM.”

Significantly, survey authors found that the largest portion of money spent came from turnover costs of replacing staff members who left their jobs or retired early because of personal attacks or the broader demoralizing school climate.

UCLA’s Institute for Democracy, Education and Access (IDEA) published “The Costs of Conflict: The Fiscal Impact of Culturally Divisive Conflict on Public Schools in the United States” in October, estimating that U.S. public schools spent \$3.2 billion in the 2023–24 school year on costs stemming from concerted and coordinated attacks by extremists and privatizers.

Our union has been fighting these efforts to sow fear and division in our schools and pit communities against each other by picking on our most vulnerable students — including BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students. Extremists and privatizers’ actions are part of a larger effort to erode public trust in institutions, including public education. This report now shows that in addition to costs beyond the harm done to students and educators, conflicts have resulted in loss of resources across California and the country.

The survey included questions posed to 467 school

superintendents across the country about whether and how often districts have been challenged on teaching and learning about race and racism, policies protecting LGBTQ+ students, and books available to students in the school library. It also looked at the frequency with which conflict has prompted and employed misinformation, violent rhetoric and threats. Two-thirds said their districts were experiencing moderate to

high levels of culturally divisive conflict that is disrupting districts, negatively impacting schools and classrooms, and needlessly costing schools millions of dollars that could better be used to serve students.

Survey responses were anonymous, but the report was referenced by the L.A. Times in a story on the Chino Valley school district, whose extremist policies have led to multiple conflicts with educators, students and community members. The Times notes that the district’s “legal costs have soared — totaling more than \$1.2 million last

school year, more than double the annual total in 2022. The district says that the Chicago-based Liberty Justice Center, a conservative legal firm, is representing it for free in its legal battles with the state.”

The UCLA report concludes that “it is vital for educational leaders and for the broader public to work to diminish the opportunities for ‘conflict entrepreneurs’ to disrupt and distract and gain power — in school board meetings and elsewhere.” The substantial money saved means education funding could be used for its intended purpose — educating and nurturing our students.

Read the report at idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/costs-of-conflict/. ■



“It is vital for educational leaders and for the broader public to work to diminish the opportunities for ‘conflict entrepreneurs’ to disrupt and distract and gain power — in school board meetings and elsewhere.”

—From “The Costs of Conflict: The Fiscal Impact of Culturally Divisive Conflict on Public Schools in the United States”

▼ A Rocklin school board meeting in September 2023 drew a crowd; the board went on to adopt an illegal forced-outing policy. Courtesy KCRA.



Protecting Our Rights, Defending Our Students

Locals score huge victories for educators, schools in Public Employment Relations Board rulings

By Julian Peebles

"I TOLD THE SCHOOL BOARD exactly our plan during my public comments," says Travis Mougeotte, president of Rocklin Teachers Professional Association (RTPA). "I told them not only were we not going to follow the (forced outing) policy, we were also going to file a complaint with PERB. And we did."


RTPA's recent victory awarded by the state Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) (see sidebar, page 25) was one of several recent wins statewide that protect our students, defend our members, uphold our contracts and respect our collective bargaining processes. From fighting back against extremist boards and their dangerous policies in Rocklin and Temecula, to winning long battles for justice for wrongfully terminated members in Sacramento, to reversing more than 40 years of union busting in Clovis, CTA members are organizing in communities and winning historic victories for our students, members and public schools.

"It reiterates that our members really do hold the power, and we have an unstoppable voice — whether that's for

classroom and educational issues or student and social issues," Mougeotte says.

In Rocklin, an extremist-controlled school board adopted an illegal forced-outing policy in late 2023 after a difficult public meeting where the vast majority of attendees spoke in opposition, only to see a quick discussion and vote of approval. Mougeotte says that RTPA immediately sprang into action, gathering information about the policy, engaging members to gauge opinions and contacting CTA locals in Southern California like Associated Chino Teachers to learn from their struggle on similar issues. He added that RTPA began a media campaign to broadcast what Rocklin teachers were seeing about the policy and where they thought it was headed.

Mougeotte says Rocklin educators showed up for their students and each other.

"Our members are very connected and always organizing. We've done a lot of work to keep our members engaged and informed, so when there's a big ask, they're ready to 

▼ Temecula Valley EA educators and community at a Temecula school board meeting; the board adopted policies requiring educators to “out” their LGBTQ+ students and banned the display of flags in classrooms other than the U.S. and California flags. Courtesy Capital & Main



go,” says Mougeotte, a high school social studies teacher. “It was just a matter of educating our members about the situation and what we needed from them, and then the organizing fell into place.”

After reaching out to the superintendent and school board to slow down the process and work together (and receiving no response), RTPA issued a cease-and-desist notice and demanded the district bargain the change in working conditions. Later, RTPA leaders amended their complaint to say that the board’s policy was illegal, so they were not demanding to bargain the impacts — “We’re not putting our members’ credentials and livelihoods in jeopardy,” Mougeotte says he expected the district to back off the policy, but when it didn’t, RTPA turned to PERB.

“Every time somebody has told the district ‘no this is illegal,’ they refuse to accept it and find a new attorney or a new avenue to try,” he says. “They have a policy of ‘If you see something, say something.’ We saw something, we said something and they still did it anyway.”

In June, a PERB administrative law judge ruled in RTPA’s favor, ordering the forced-outing policy to be reversed and directing the school district to stop trying to circumvent the collective bargaining process. The district has appealed that ruling to the full PERB Board, but RTPA is confident that PERB will uphold its win. Mougeotte says they are thrilled with the initial victory, adding it to a list of recent wins Rocklin members have powered with their activism and using them as energy to keep up the momentum. He’s excited about what’s next for RTPA members.

“We spent a lot of energy and resources for the last few months,” Mougeotte says. “The beautiful thing about ‘next’ for our membership is that next is back in their classrooms, focused on their kids.”

Temecula Educators Win: PERB overturns extremist policies

“It was very clear to our members that this was an attack on our union and it was an attack on them as well. We are the union,” says Edgar Díaz, president of Temecula Valley Educators Association (TVEA). “You can’t say you love teachers and then try to nullify part of our contract.”

Temecula Valley Unified School District (TVUSD) garnered national attention in late 2023 when an extremist school board majority adopted illegal policies that violated the rights of Temecula students and educators and put them in danger. This is the same board that refused to approve a social studies textbook because it included a section on civil rights icon Harvey Milk — so Díaz said TVEA was familiar with their extremist antics when they adopted policies requiring educators to “out” their LGBTQ+ students, as well as banning the display of any flags in classrooms other than the United States and California flags.

Díaz says that when the school board made these decisions, it changed educators’ working conditions and unilaterally attempted to nullify part of their contract — and it immediately put some of the district’s most vulnerable students at risk.

“Part of any public school teacher’s DNA is that we accept any student that walks through our door. We care about them as students and also as individuals,” says Díaz, a 23-year teacher. “When policies are adopted that create division between students and teachers or that whittle away at the trust people have for educators — that creates distrust and makes it difficult to do our jobs.”

After an attempt at bargaining went fruitless, TVEA turned to PERB and filed an unfair practice charge over the district’s unilateral changes to members’ working conditions and the

▼ In 2019, Sacramento City TA organized with parents and community to save the child development teachers' jobs, then turned to PERB, which found the district had acted illegally.



district's restrictions on protected union speech.

"This allowed us to use the enforcement part of bargaining to tell people that the district was breaking the rules," Díaz says. "As educators, this matters to us — fairness and being able to rely on rules."

In October 2024, an administrative law judge found that the school district had indeed failed to bargain and infringed on the rights of educators with the ban on flags, ordering TVUSD to rescind both policies (which they had yet to do as of press time, Díaz says).

Díaz says TVEA members are ready to continue focusing on what matters — fighting for the schools all Temecula students deserve.

"We want to work with our community partners to improve the state of special education in our district and support students with IEPs to help them meet their goals," Díaz says. "We want to help educators do their jobs without stress. Our big campaign is to get to issues that matter now."

The lengthy and ongoing fight to defend their public schools from extremists means TVEA has an active and engaged membership willing to fight for each other and their students. Díaz says it's important for local leaders to talk to their members and work toward wins that matter to them.

"We've been focusing on bargaining and working conditions

and developing our site reps so we can represent our members," he says. "The site conditions matter the most and if you're making a difference at the sites, members will be more likely to join your efforts on an association level."

A Marathon for Justice: Sac City teachers win big after five years

"It was a long journey, and it means a lot," says Nikki Milevsky, president of Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA). "Our evil superintendent tried to decimate our child development department, and we caught him."

SCTA leaders were persistent about the fight for justice for members who were wrongfully terminated five years ago, winning a massive settlement in September 2024 for 18 teachers: \$50,000 each for a total of \$900,000. A 2021 PERB ruling found Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) had illegally laid off child development teachers and replaced them with employees from another public agency, directing the district to negotiate with SCTA over back pay.

In 2019, SCTA organized with community partners to save the laid-off teachers, pleading with the school board to change their minds.

"We organized members, parents and students to come to school board meetings. We brought a lot of



What is PERB?

The **California Public Employment Relations Board** is a state agency that oversees collective bargaining and labor relations for public employees, including public school employees. PERB enforces labor laws for these workers, ensuring that their rights to organize and engage in collective bargaining are protected. PERB handles disputes related to unfair labor practices and issues rulings on labor relations between public agencies and the unions that represent their employees. PERB also provides guidance on labor law compliance and aims to promote stable and constructive relationships between public employers and employee organizations.



▼ Sac City TA members rallied to save early childhood educators' jobs.



things to light during that process, but it still took the legal action through PERB that got it reversed,” Milevsky says. “We were able to get 10 layoffs rescinded through organizing and fighting with the district, but that didn’t help everyone who got laid off. So, we had to go to PERB.”

Milevsky says the former SCUSD superintendent made a deal to cut the child development educators before any information went to the school board and without bargaining with SCTA. The PERB complaint was part of a multi-pronged attack to force the district to do the right thing. Milevsky says it’s rewarding to finally get the issue settled and right the long-standing wrong.

“Fifty thousand dollars is a good chunk of money,” she says. “Some members entered very rough times getting laid off. We were and still are the highest-paid child development department in the area so even if they got another job, it was less pay — so this really helps.”

This settlement is another in a string of historic victories by SCTA members, including a clean sweep of their supported school board candidates in the November election. Milevsky credits deep organizing and a membership that stepped up to work together to overcome obstacles and persist through disappointment to win for each other, their students and the Sacramento community.

“Every victory was a group effort and took a lot of involvement and empowering of our members,” she says. “We won an eight-day strike, but we still had the same lame superintendent for another year. It’s a marathon with a lot of hills.”

Ending a Culture of Union-Busting: Clovis educators continue fight

“No matter what happens, we have laid a foundation of change in this district,” says Amy Kilburn, president of Association of Clovis Educators (ACE). “It is now up to our colleagues and fellow educators to figure out what they want to do with this path of change.”

The ongoing struggle by Clovis educators against a half-century of union-busting culture got a huge boost in June 2024 when PERB ruled that Clovis Unified School District’s (CUSD) Faculty Senate was an illegal employer-supported organization (under

Pro Tips for Organizing Around PERB Complaints

“Never apologize for wanting to improve teaching and learning conditions in your district and never be made to feel bad about that.”

—**Kristin Heimerdinger**,
Association of Clovis Educators

“Always be authentic and be willing to say ‘I don’t know, let me get back to you on that. What do you think about it?’ Invite others to the conversation. If you’ve set this goal for your membership and you think it will benefit your students and members, then normalize it to make it work.”

—Association of Clovis Educators President
Amy Kilburn

“The more information that your members see, the better. Having our members involved and seeing firsthand how the employer acts really galvanizes unity.”

—Sacramento City Teachers Association President
Nikki Milevsky

“Talk to as many people as you can, members and community. You never know when a conversation is going to spark something in anyone. This is especially crucial in inspiring new leaders in the association.”

—**Edgar Díaz**, Temecula Valley Educators Association

“Commit to transparent communication.

My members always know exactly what they’re fighting for. We had a very clear plan. Always be organizing — be transparent and trust your leadership team as much as your membership.”

—Rocklin Professional Teachers Association President
Travis Mougeotte

the guise of a legitimate venue for educator concerns) and ordered that it be disestablished. The agency further acknowledged that the district had been interfering with the ongoing ACE unionization campaign for the district’s more than 2,000 classroom teachers and ordered all union-busting to cease.

The ruling shows what ACE organizers have been saying during their historic organizing campaign: Clovis Unified has been breaking the law for a long time to keep educators from forming a union, creating a culture that was openly hostile to educators seeking to unite their voices on behalf of each other and their students.

▼ ACE members' organizing work was validated by a June 2024 PERB ruling that mandated an end to the district's union-busting. Work continues to organize classroom educators into ACE.



Kilburn says the PERB victory is validating and means that she and other ACE leaders can exhale and continue collecting signatures on union petitions, so that every educator in Clovis has the security of a union contract. In 2021, ACE made history when Clovis Unified's school psychologists and mental health support professionals voted to unionize. This year, the district's American Sign Language interpreters and naturalist educators voted to join ACE as well.

Kristin Heimerdinger, ACE vice president, says the PERB win is so encouraging because the district is finally being held accountable for its actions — checks and balances for an administration that has acted with impunity for so long.

"It just felt so empowering because, yes, the district can be held accountable, be expected to follow the law and do the right thing," she says. "It is our goal to have a collaborative working relationship with our admin and school board. The work is much better and easier if we can do it together. But it's been hard getting them to understand Clovis was breaking the law, and we have to work on a better way to move forward collaboratively."

Initially, a PERB administrative law judge ruled that CUSD must acknowledge that their union busting was unlawful in a written notice posting (as is typically done). But ACE appealed to the full PERB Board and asked for the statement to be read by the superintendent on video instead, which was upheld (Clovis

Unified is appealing this part of the decision). PERB ordered the superintendent to record an uninterrupted verbatim reading of the order. Kilburn says that this will ensure that every Clovis educator sees and hears the same message, along with other requirements including an ACE representative must be given the opportunity to be in the room when the video is shown

"This is vital to allow Clovis educators to make their own decisions on how they want to move forward," Kilburn says. "Because Clovis Unified was breaking the law for 40 years," Heimerdinger adds.

ACE organizers are hard at work visiting school sites and talking to educators to try to turn victory at PERB into signatures on union petitions. Kilburn says it starts by normalizing conversations with fellow educators about working, teaching and learning conditions on campus, developing a collective consciousness that there is opportunity to create change, and breaking down a culture of fear and silence to build the schools their students deserve.

"I want educators to realize it is normal for them to have a say in teaching and learning conditions," Heimerdinger says. "I want to continue to change the culture at this district and I want educators to realize that while their work is noble, that doesn't mean they should be exploited for it." ■



Locals Shout Out CTA Legal Team

Leaders from all four locals expressed gratitude for the support and expertise of CTA's Legal Department, sharing that they always knew they had a powerful team on their side during their respective fights.

"CTA Legal has been fabulous in providing us with advice and support to develop our case," TVEA's Díaz says. "The ability and knowledge they have to work for the rights of educators and the benefit of students is fantastic."

"Our CTA staff attorney is absolutely incredible! The dedication of CTA in using legal staff time to do our work when we have nothing to offer back initially is such an incredible blessing," ACE's Heimerdinger adds. "None of this work is possible without the backing of CTA and such a ninja attorney who was willing to wage the war for us."

▼ Clockwise, from top left: CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones, Natomas Teachers Assn. President Mara Harvey, San Mateo Elementary Teachers Assn. member Tara Dixon, Redlands Teachers Assn. member Susan Abt.



OUR FIGHT CONTINUES FOR PREGNANCY LEAVE *THE TIME IS NOW!*

MORE THAN 600 educators and allies gathered at a CTA virtual Town Hall on Nov. 21 to discuss what's next in the push for pregnancy leave for public school educators.

The upshot: Keep organizing! Be ready to support the CTA-sponsored Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act, AB 65, introduced by Asm. Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters) in December. AB 65 would provide all public school employees with up to 14 weeks of fully paid leave for pregnancy and pregnancy-related health conditions. See page 29 for ways to get involved.

"The impact of passing this crucial legislation will be immeasurable," said CTA Secretary-Treasurer and new mother Erika Jones. "In addition to supporting mothers and their families in one of the largest, predominantly-female led workforces, AB 65 will benefit all of California's children by helping the state's public schools recruit and retain teachers."

Jones facilitated the town hall, telling participants, "[AB 65]

is a legislative priority for CTA." She made reference to the effort to pass a similar bill in the last legislative session. "We're going to continue the momentum, continue to build and look forward to winning this."

Town hall speakers included Aguiar-Curry as well as several CTA members who talked about their experience with the lack of pregnancy leave and its impact on their lives.

Aguiar-Curry spoke of the need to "educate" new legislators in particular about the importance of pregnancy leave; she stressed that people need to understand that the lack of it means educators end up leaving the profession and "we can't replace them."

The discussion focused on several key points:

- **Lack of pregnancy leave in California disproportionately discriminates against women**, who make up 73% of the teacher workforce. Because women must deplete their sick time with each pregnancy, they have substantially fewer sick

**“Pregnancy leave
is a fundamental right.”**

—Natomas Teachers Association President
Mara Harvey

days at retirement, meaning that they need to work longer or earn less in retirement. On average, women receive almost \$100,000 less in retirement than their male colleagues.

Susan Abt, a member of Redlands Teachers Assn. who has taught since 1990, expected to retire at age 60 and went to CalSTRS to plan for it at 55. She was shocked to find out she was penalized for taking time off to have three children. “My husband [also an educator] has more years of service than me, even though he has taught fewer years,” she said. “I have to work two more years than I’d planned to.”

- **The vast majority of teachers are not entitled to paid family medical leave** (per the Family and Medical Leave Act) and must exhaust their sick leave to be able to access differential pay (their salary minus the cost of their substitute teacher). This leaves them with the decision to either schedule pregnancies around the school calendar or try to get by with substantially less pay.

San Mateo Elementary Teachers Assn. member Tara Dixon was among the many educators who was not aware that teachers have no pregnancy leave. “I heard, ‘Can’t you just plan it over the summer or over a school break?’” said Dixon, a single mother who underwent multiple IVF attempts and could not “time” her pregnancy.

- **The current practice forces pregnant educators to deplete their sick leave** and then go on unpaid leave and possibly return to work before they are physically and emotionally ready. With no sick leave available new mothers must take unpaid days off when newborns get sick or have medical appointments — or for illnesses or emergencies for themselves and their families.

Pregnancy leave for all educators

Mara Harvey, Natomas Teachers Assn. president, brought up how many people have suggested that pregnancy leave be bargained. She said NTA did bargain for it at one point. But she is adamant that pregnancy leave is a basic right that we should be able to build on in negotiations, and not have to bargain for a basic standard.

“Having to argue for something that is a basic right is a terrible and painful experience. When your district puts up pregnancy leave with what our students need in our classrooms and makes you choose it is really upsetting. Pregnancy leave is a fundamental right,” she said.

Jones agreed and said we should all be prepared to fight for AB 65. “It doesn’t have to be this way. States across the nation from Tennessee to Oklahoma provide pregnancy leave for educators. It’s time for California to do the same.” ■

**PREGNANCY
LEAVE
FOR EDUCATORS
THE TIME IS NOW!**

SPREAD THE WORD: LET’S PASS AB 65:

IT’S IMPERATIVE TO build support for the CTA-sponsored Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act, AB 65, so legislators, educators and communities across the state understand the stakes and are ready to act. Get involved:

- **Write to your legislators** — especially important for new legislators. Let them know pregnancy leave is a priority for you. Find legislators’ contact information at findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/.
- **Meet with legislators**, either at their district offices or in Sacramento. You can also meet with legislators’ staff or leave a letter at the office. CTA plans to hold several Lobby Days that you can join; stay tuned.
- **Tell your story!** How has the lack of pregnancy leave affected you personally and professionally? Legislators and the public need to hear from you. Go to cta.org/ppl.
- **Ask your local to sign on in support of AB 65.** Do the same with your school board. Talk to colleagues, friends and community members.

ELECTION 2024

▼ CTA members knocked on 500,000 doors across the state to help friends of public education win school board seats from Sacramento to Chula Vista. Left, members from Palo Alto Education Association were all smiles on the campaign trail, while Sacramento City Teachers Association members successfully elected two school board members — they have now helped elect all seven members on their school board.



When We Knock, We Win

500,000 doors: Members power school board victories as national results create uncertainty

By Julian Peebles

“WE KNOCKED ON more than 5,000 doors and I can’t wait for the next election to walk again and support our candidates,” says Tuan-Anh Huynh, president of Franklin McKinley Education Association (FMEA). “I love how our educators came out, stood up and walked for what they believed in.”

Across California, union educators took to the streets to win for public schools and our students on Election Day 2024 in school board and other races up and down the state. When the dust settled on Nov. 6, CTA members had knocked on an unprecedented 500,000 doors to elect leaders who support public schools, students and educators. CTA President David Goldberg says educators made a difference in elections from Chico to Chula Vista, with more than 100 locals running active walk campaigns to win on Election Day.

“I love how our educators came out, stood up and walked for what they believed in.”

—Franklin McKinley Education Association President **Tuan-Anh Huynh**

“As a union of 310,000 educators, we have the strength to fight for our students, our schools and our communities. In this election, we knocked on 500,000 doors and talked to voters in communities across California, from small towns to big cities,” Goldberg said the day after the election. “What we heard on the front porches of Californians is as true today as it was yesterday: we all prioritize the well-being of our students and communities. We are prepared to stand up against any attacks on our students, public education, workers’ rights and our broader communities that may come.”

The local victories were a bright spot in an otherwise difficult Presidential Election, with Vice President Kamala Harris coming up short in her historic bid to succeed Joe Biden as President of the United States. Quoting Dr. Martin

◆ CTA Members Win School Board Seats ◆

The following CTA members are some of those who won election in November:



Pat Carpio-Aguilar,
Sunnyvale Education Association,
elected to Fremont Union High
School Board



Mikki Cichocki,
CTA/NEA-Retired, reelected to
San Bernardino City School Board



Angela Der Ramos,
Alisal Education Association,
CTA Board of Directors, elected to
Hartnell College Board of Trustees



Karla Griego,
United Teachers Los Angeles, elected
to Los Angeles Unified School Board



Charlie Jones,
Hayward Education Association,
elected to Pleasanton Unified
School Board



Gayle Olsen,
CTA/NEA-Retired, elected to
Chico Unified School Board



Vanessa Robinson,
Greenfield Teachers Association,
elected to Salinas Union
High School Board



Ken Tang,
Garvey Education Association,
reelected to Alhambra Unified
School Board



Lucy Ugarte,
Sweetwater Education Association,
elected to Chula Vista
School Board



Ken Wagman,
Gavilan College Faculty Association,
elected to Cabrillo College Board
of Trustees



Dr. Randa Wahbe,
*United Faculty of North Orange
County Community College District,*
Community College Association
Vice President, elected to Citrus
College Board of Trustees



VanCedric Williams,
United Educators of San Francisco,
CTA Board of Directors, reelected to
Oakland Unified School Board

Continued from Page 30

Luther King, Jr., NEA President Becky Pringle said of the election result “the road to freedom is a difficult, hard road — it always makes for temporary setbacks.”

“This is not the outcome we campaigned for, nor the future we wanted for our students and families, but it is the road through history we now must travel,” Pringle said. “We know this outcome will create anxiety for so many of our students and their families. In the coming days, weeks and months, we will care for students who are at risk of losing their rights, protections and accommodations. We will console students who fear for members of their families and their place in our communities. And we will use our educator voices to speak out against politicians trying to harm →

Continued on Page 33



CTA-Recommended Initiatives

Several CTA-recommended initiatives passed, including **Proposition 2**, a \$10 billion bond measure to build or repair public schools.

Props. 3 and 4 also passed. The former repeals Prop. 8 (2008), which defined marriage in the state constitution as between one man and one woman.

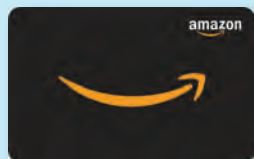
Prop. 4 is a \$10 billion bond measure that ensures communities have access to clean drinking water and are wildfire-safe.

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▼ Other CTA-endorsed educators who won their races in the November election included Dan Borden (retired), Annie Delgado and Jorge Pacheco Jr.



Locally, many educators got active in their local’s political activity for the first time ever, participating in precinct walks, postcard parties, phone banks and other campaign events. In FMEA in San Jose, nearly one in three members volunteered to help defend their school board from two extremist candidates. With the second-most door knocks per member in the state, FMEA successfully defeated the extremist challengers and reelected a longtime incumbent.

“Members from every single school in our district did work this election, whether it was canvassing or making signs, and

it shows the power of us coming together,” says Imelda Murillo, FMEA site rep.

With uncertain times coming with the former president returning to power, Goldberg says CTA has the combined strength and solidarity of 310,000 educators fighting for our students, public schools and communities.

“We’re committed to fight for the future we all deserve,” Goldberg says. “That’s what union educators do.”

Visit cta.org/election for more information on our union’s election victories across the state. ■



▲ Other union-endorsed school board candidates who won

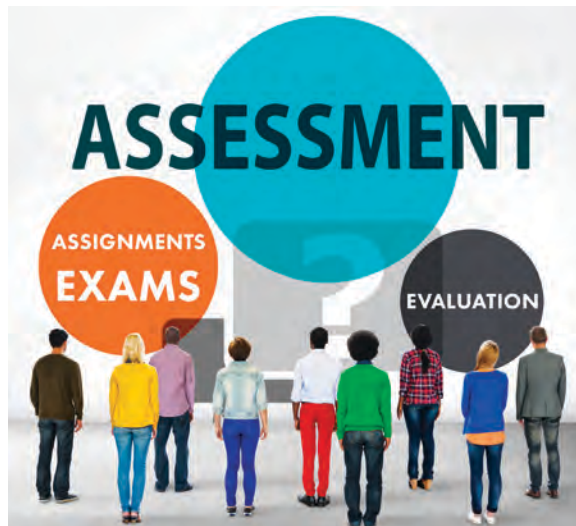
Legislative Update

Bill to End Longstanding Retirement Disparity Passes House, Awaits Senate Vote

The **Social Security Fairness Act**, which would end a longstanding injustice, passed the House of Representatives and as of press time was awaiting a vote in the U.S. Senate, where a filibuster-proof 62 senators have co-sponsored the bill. The House passed the bill in November by an overwhelming bipartisan margin, 327-75.

The bill, H.R. 82, would fully repeal both the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision, which unfairly reduce social security benefits for more than 2.5 million Americans, including many public school educators and CTA members. The GPO and WEP discourage people from becoming educators, especially those in mid-career who stand to lose Social Security benefits they have already earned. This adversely affects the quality of the education our students receive.

More than 280,000 Californians will see a boost in their retirement pay if this bill is passed and signed into law. Let our senators know we want a vote on the Social Security Fairness Act at nea.org/takeaction.



Share Your TPA Story as Workgroup Considers Changes

Our work continues to end the ineffective and unnecessary **Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs)**, which have become harmful barriers for aspiring teachers. Our union is collecting stories to submit to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing workgroup currently considering potential changes to the TPA and the credentialing process — share yours at cta.org/TPAstory.



Women in the Legislature

Women now hold a record 59, or 49%, of the California State Legislature's 120 seats. Women's representation in the Capitol is up from nearly 31% in 2020 and 25% in 2016, according to the Center for American Women and Politics. More than a dozen of the newly elected women won seats held by men, many of whom were forced out due to term limits.

Democrats continue to hold a supermajority in the Legislature, but many of the issues that involve families and cost of living are likely to draw bipartisan support, particularly among women. This could include the Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act (AB 65; see page 28).

"Generally, there's less focus on ego and more focus on results when women lead," Susannah Delano with Close the Gap California told KCRA. "Women are more likely to cross the aisle if it means an effective compromise. They really bring this inclusive lens to problems that need to be solved, and they propose solutions that are comprehensive."



CTA Organizing Grants

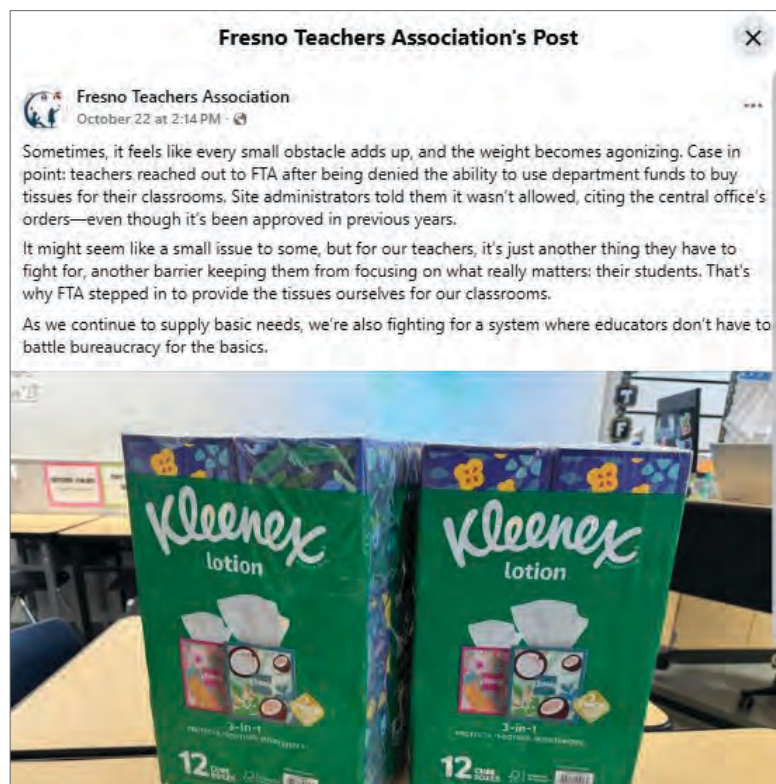
Local leaders can apply for CTA Organizing Grants to help organizing efforts in your locals. Visit cta.org/localgrants to learn more. Among the grants:

- **Local President Release Time grants** provide release time to local union presidents to lead and carry out a site-based organizing program within their chapter.
- **Planning grants** provide financial resources to local chapters to support the development of a strategic organizing and member engagement plan as part of the CTA Organizing Plan.
- **Site Visit grants** cover release time for locals to conduct site visits; these visits should center around local priorities such as asking members to join the union, preparing for bargaining and organizing to win a strong contract, school board elections, a community schools campaign, etc.

NEA Local President Release Grant: Deadline Jan. 20, 2025

The NEA Local President Release Grant provides financial assistance toward the full- or part-time release of chapter presidents to build and strengthen the association from the grassroots. **This NEA program is independent of the CTA Local Presidents Release Time for Organizing Program.**

Locals with 200+ members are eligible for the grant. The chapter's current budget needs to sustain their share of the program's cost without impairing existing programs and chapters need to plan to participate for a three-year, nonrenewable period which is subject to annual evaluation. The cost is shared between NEA, CTA and the local. For more information and to apply, visit nea.org/resource-library/c4o-local-president-release-grant.



Teachers Battle for Basics

Fresno Teachers Association stepped up to buy educators tissues for their classrooms after the district denied this basic supply:

▼ Las Lomitas educators went on strike for three days in October, winning a contract that will help retain quality educators.



When We Strike, We Win

Las Lomitas Education Association builds historic movement in America's richest ZIP code

By Julian Peeples & Gabriella Landeros

FOR THREE POWERFUL DAYS in October, the richest ZIP code in the United States was ground zero in the fight for the public schools all students deserve, as the 92 members of Las Lomitas Education Association (LLEA) went on strike for the future of Menlo Park and Atherton students and won.

“This victory will bring much-deserved stability to our school communities,” said LLEA Co-President Jennifer Montalvo. “We made the powerful decision to go on strike and we won the contract we need to stay in the community we love serving.”

After three days on picket lines, LLEA won an agreement that will help keep educators in Las Lomitas Elementary School District, securing a 16% pay increase and improvements to health benefits while building a powerful movement in an unlikely place, with an average home value of \$7.5 million in Atherton. With high turnover and educators wondering how they could afford to continue to work at Las Lomitas, LLEA members went on strike to put an end to the district’s retention crisis and forge a better future for themselves and their students.

“For far too long, educators have been shouldering the burden of insufficient salary increases to keep up with the cost of living and paying more each year out of pocket for employee health benefits,” said LLEA Co-President Daniella Lefer.

LLEA members had worked without a contract since July

2023. Soaring housing and health care costs were forcing educators to take second jobs to survive and consider teaching elsewhere. LLEA members refused to sit back, organizing and calling attention to the fact their salaries were the lowest compared to nearby school districts.

“We are here to demand fairness, respect and a contract that recognizes the value we bring to our schools and communities,” said LLEA member Caryn Carlson. “We’re asking for a contract that prioritizes educators, because when teachers are supported, our students thrive.”

LLEA members were joined by union educators from other CTA locals and LLEA’s classified colleagues from CSEA Las Lomitas Elementary Chapter 515 — who went on a sympathy strike during LLEA’s struggle, refusing to cross the picket line and showing that solidarity is a verb.

“The support from our classified colleagues, parents, students, families and community members kept us moving forward to victory,” said Montalvo. “Together, we remained united and steadfast in winning for our students today and future generations.”

Las Lomitas parents and students joined the picket lines, offering hugs and support, and bringing food and refreshments. LLEA members canvassed neighborhoods after the second day of the strike, reaching out to the school community to explain the situation and ask for their support in reaching a



▼ LLEA Co-Presidents Daniella Lefer and Jennifer Montalvo.



▼ Parents, families and fellow CTA members packed picket lines.



fair agreement. Las Lomitas parent Debbie Fisher echoed LLEA members, sharing that she was worried more educators would leave the district without the resources and support they needed and deserved.

"Our community thrives because of our teachers," said Fisher. "It should have never gotten to this point."

Attempts to reach an agreement fizzled due to district administrators' antics and dysfunction. At several points, district administrators opted to go home early and left LLEA's team at the table rather than putting in work to end the strike. LLEA members and supporters held a candlelight vigil outside the district office as bargaining resumed on the Saturday after three days on strike, to put pressure on district administrators to meet their demands. In the early evening, the LLEA bargaining team emerged from the building victorious, shared the news of an agreement and the crowd burst into emotion.

"We are so excited to go back to the classroom and do what we love to do," Lefer said, after reaching agreement. "Thank you to all our supporters, especially our parents, who were with us until the very end." ■

VOICES FROM THE STRIKE

"We are united by a common cause, one that transcends our classrooms and goes to the very heart of what it means to be an educator. This strike is not just about fair compensation. It's about respect for the profession that we love. It's about ensuring the future of education is one that values both our students and our teachers."

—LLEA Co-President **Daniella Lefer**

"We're here to demand fairness, respect and a contract that recognizes the value we bring to our schools and communities. We're asking for a contract that prioritizes educators ... because when teachers are supported, our students thrive."

—**Caryn Carlson**, LLEA member and La Entrada teacher

"We are striking not only for ourselves but for the generations of students to come, who deserve a school system that is supported, funded and able to offer them the best. We are striking for a future where teaching is a profession that is honored and fairly compensated, where students and educators can thrive."

—LLEA Co-President **Jennifer Montalvo**

"The irony is that this strike is happening in the wealthiest place in the country. Yet the teachers' compensation is the lowest when compared to nearby districts. As a parent and taxpayer, I want to see the district invest in more education, not more administration."

—**Thomas Been**, Las Lomitas parent

BARGAINING UPDATE

By Julian Peebles



CAMPBELL:

Educators Organize and Win

The united members of Campbell High School Teachers Association (CHSTA) built power during a lengthy contract campaign, winning a tentative agreement during fact-finding in late October.

The campaign saw CHSTA members build site engagement teams, expand their leadership capacity, rally in the streets of Campbell, and pack board meetings — in an effort that saw half the membership get involved to win the two-year agreement.

CHSTA won raises in both years of the contract and defeated language that would have required educators to attend more meetings.

"With your support, we won smaller class sizes for students learning English and salary increases to keep up with the cost of living, and we held the line on expanding teachers' workdays," CHSTA leaders posted on social media.

"With [our members'] support, we won smaller class sizes for students learning English and salary increases to keep up with the cost of living, and we held the line on expanding teachers' workdays."

—Campbell High School Teachers Association social media post



MARYSVILLE:

Negotiations at Impasse, Headed to Mediation

Marysville Unified Teachers Association (MUTA) members are rallying in support of a fair contract that recruits and retains educators and prioritizes safety. MUTA and the district are currently at impasse and headed to mediation, with members organizing to fight for the contract educators deserve. MUTA leaders are currently visiting sites and conducting a strike survey.

Educators have held a number of organizing activities, including wearing their red union shirts, holding a "Day on the District Office Lawn," attending school board meetings, distributing flyers to parents at drop-off, posting to social media and enforcing their contract on divided classes.

MUTA is still bargaining for the 2023–24 school year, with the local and the district yet to agree on salary and safety articles. MUTA made several safety proposals to protect educators from student and parent assaults that the district flat-out refused.

Bargaining is ongoing.



BARSTOW:

Educators Have No Confidence in Superintendent

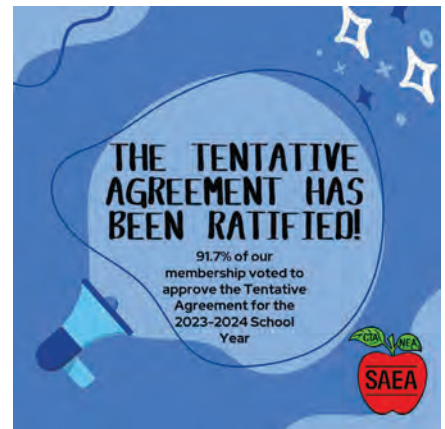
In response to ongoing disrespect by their superintendent and lack of concern for their safety, Barstow Education Association (BEA) members passed a Vote of No Confidence in Deanna Dibble Swearingin's leadership in October.

With 80% of members voting, 85% voted that they had no confidence in the superintendent. When educators packed the school board meeting to announce the vote and voice their concerns, they were surprised to find new rules intended to silence their voices — such as a completely new prohibition on signs in the board room.

Educators were also surprised to see additional security personnel at the meeting, and disrespected when administrators called local police to attend. The meeting ended abruptly when a board member needed to leave suddenly, causing a lack of quorum.

BEA leaders said educators have serious concerns about the superintendent's ability to effectively lead the district and support students. They have expressed concerns about ongoing safety issues for students and staff, a lack of effective communication and a failure to address educator concerns, which have led to declining teacher retention rates in Barstow schools.

"We need a leader who will ensure all students are treated equitably, maintain a safe environment, and foster a setting conducive to learning, so every student can reach their full potential," BEA President Stacia Lewis said to the school board. "We are asking the board to take our concerns seriously and to take swift action in response to the results of the no confidence vote."



SANTA ANA:

Members Win Pay Raise, Safety Language

After a year of negotiations and six mediation sessions, Santa Ana Educators' Association (SAEA) won an agreement that will pay educators more and provide better safety protection.

SAEA won a 3% on-schedule pay increase and a 3% off-schedule bonus, both retroactive to July 1, 2023. Members also won the district agreeing to absorb the cost of health care for 2024–25. In addition to improvements in the contract, SAEA won an expansion of safety language that provides protection against threats of assault and sexual harassment, verbal or written (including online), and unauthorized recordings/images.

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY:

Welcome to the Family

The members of Santa Ynez Valley High School District Educational Service Professionals (SYVHSDSP) are enjoying the security of a CTA union contract for the first time, as the new chapter came to agreement on their first collective bargaining agreement.

The chapter's top economic priority was health care — and they won fully district paid health care, worth more than \$20,000 per member per year. The contract also includes a 2.5% increase to the salary schedule that will increase to 3% if property tax revenue increases by more than 5.5%.



California School
DASHBOARD

Investments, Funding Pay Dividends

Latest state School Dashboard shows continued advances in multiple measures

THE DATA IS IN: Historic increases in funding for our schools in recent, post-pandemic years are paying off and indicate that continued funding is essential to sustain and grow these gains in years to come.

Specifically, the 2024 California School Dashboard, an online tool designed to help communities across the state access important information about TK–12 schools and districts, was released in November. The report shows that student outcomes in seven state indicators continue to improve after significant investments to ensure healthy and safe learning environments, accelerate academic outcomes and prepare students for post-secondary opportunities.

The indicators, a key component of the state's school accountability system, include the latest data on graduation rates, suspension rates, test scores, English learner progress, the college/career indicator, chronic absenteeism and local indicators.

Dashboard highlights:

- All student groups show significant increases in consistently attending schools, with a 16.7% year-over-year decline in chronic absenteeism.
- There is continued statewide growth in student graduation rates, with the largest cohort of students graduating K–12 schools since 2017.
- Over 10,000 students graduated in their fifth year during 2023–24 as members of the class of 2023.
- Upon graduating, students are earning distinctions such as the State Seal of Biliteracy at higher rates than ever.
- College and career readiness has been maintained for all students and increased for specific student groups, narrowing equity gaps for Black/African American students, American Indian/Alaska Native students and Long-Term English Learners.
- Suspension rates have declined for every student group, though there is need for a continued focus on disparities in suspension

for Black/African American students, foster youth, Long-Term English Learners, homeless youth and students with disabilities.

- The chronic absenteeism rate, which measures the number of students who missed 10% of the days they were enrolled, declined to 20.4% in 2023–24, a decline of 4.5% from last year and a 9.6% decline from an all-time high of 30% in 2021–22. Equity gaps in chronic absenteeism are becoming smaller, with improvements made in the most vulnerable student groups, including foster youth, homeless youth, students with disabilities, English learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged students and migrant students.

This continued improvement in chronic absenteeism follows significant state investments in initiatives that support family engagement and student well-being, such as Community Schools, Expanded Learning, Universal Meals and Mental Health Supports. CTA supports all these initiatives and is strongly committed to the Community Schools movement; read about CTA's Community Schools work at cta.org/communityschools.

The four-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2024 is 86.4%, a slight increase from last year and a higher rate than pre-pandemic levels. The 2023–24 four-year adjusted cohort also included more graduates who meet UC/CSU admission requirements than prior to the pandemic, with 227,463 students (51.4% of graduates) eligible for admission at California's public universities.

"We're seeing that when we provide for the most vulnerable in our communities all students reap the rewards. Our migrant students and socioeconomically disadvantaged students show marked improvements in consistent school attendance and graduation rates, reflecting the dedication of our educators and students alike," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond.

California State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond said the Dashboard results "show California is continuing to make important strides in post-pandemic recovery.... There is still much work to do, and it will be critically important to continue the forward-thinking initiatives and investments made in recent years so that they will continue to pay dividends in the coming years."

In addition to the state indicators, local educational agencies (districts, county offices of education, charter schools, etc.) use local indicators to report progress based on local data. For details on this and other Dashboard results, visit cde.ca.gov/Ta/ac/cm. ■

Exceptional & Inspiring

The 2025 California Teachers of the Year

IN OCTOBER, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond named five exceptional educators as the 2025 California Teachers of the Year. All are CTA members.

The educators are ambassadors of the profession and serve as representatives of the state for the calendar year. Thurmond noted that they have had a tremendous impact in their schools, with their students and in their communities, highlighting their dedication, innovation and hard work.

"These remarkable teachers have a lasting impact on their students, equipping them with the skills needed for success. They serve as an inspiration and exemplify the exceptional work happening in California schools," he said.

The Teachers of the Year:



KRISTEN LOPRELL, Grossmont Education Assn., is a high school mathematics and AP Calculus teacher at **Grossmont High School** in El Cajon.



ROBERT MAUGER, Corona Norco Teachers Assn., is a high school Career and Technical Education transportation automotive teacher at **Corona High School** in Corona.



NICHOLAS WESTFALL, United Teachers Los Angeles, is a high school physical education teacher at **Alexander Hamilton Senior High School** in Los Angeles.



ARBY JEAN WOLKOV, United Teachers Los Angeles, is a high school American Sign Language teacher at **William Howard Taft Charter High School** in Woodland Hills.



MATTHEW WINHEIM, Palmdale Elementary Teachers Assn., is a middle school STEM aviation and mathematics teacher at **Space Aeronautics Gateway to Exploration Magnet Academy** in Palmdale.

Thurmond nominated Winheim as California's representative for 2025 National Teacher of the Year. Winheim will compete against other state nominees; the winner will be announced in the spring.

Presented by the California Department of Education (CDE) and supported by the California Teachers of the Year Foundation, the California Teachers of the Year Program began in 1972 to honor outstanding teachers and encourage and inspire new teachers to enter the profession.

County offices of education nominate California Teachers of the Year applicants through their county-level competitions. The CDE selection committees review applications, evaluate teachers' rapport with students, classroom environments, presentation skills, and teaching techniques, and interview the teachers. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction then selects the five California Teachers of the Year and the National Teacher of the Year nominee. For more information, visit cde.ca.gov/ta/sr/ct. ■



State Council Celebrates 120 Years

THE HIGHEST POLICY-MAKING

body in our union, CTA State Council of Education, celebrates 120 years in 2025.

Initially founded as the California Educational Society in 1863 and then later becoming the State Teachers Association, our union incorporated as California Teachers Association in 1905. Leaders including CTA founder and former Superintendent of Public Instruction John Swett established the State Council of Education “which would meet periodically to set organizational policy, collect dues, adopt a budget, recommend expenditures and elect officers.”

Under the organization’s new democratic structure, California’s classroom teachers — now speaking with one increasingly powerful voice — began assuming leadership roles, as more were elected to State Council. These Council members led our union to some massive victories early on — lobbying to establish a statewide community college system in 1911 and persuading the Legislature to print free school

▼ Delegates vote at a recent State Council.



textbooks for all public school students in first through eighth grade.

Our union’s trailblazing leaders also won the state’s first “continuing contract” law, providing for educators to be automatically reemployed every school year unless notified otherwise, as well as the establishment of a state teachers’ retirement system, which became CalSTRS, in 1913 — providing retirement security to educators who dedicated their lives to educating generations. Today, CalSTRS is the largest educators-only pension in the world. Happy anniversary, State Council! — *Julian Peebles*

Golden Anniversary for Collective Bargaining

The CTA-sponsored Rodda Act gave educators the right to negotiate contracts. In 2025, collective bargaining for public school educators and community college faculty celebrates 50 years, marking the golden anniversary for Senate Bill 160, the Rodda Act.

Authored by State Sen. Albert Rodda, the bill was signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown on Sept. 22, 1975, granting educators and faculty the right to form unions and collectively negotiate wages, benefits and working conditions. This marked a significant shift in how labor relations were handled in California’s public schools.

The Rodda Act was a response to growing demands from educators for better working conditions and professional recognition. It replaced the previous “meet and confer” system, which was more informal and often left teachers with little negotiating power.

The Rodda Act allowed public school employees to choose a union as their exclusive representative in negotiations with school districts, ensuring that the union speaks for all employees in the bargaining unit. The new law defined negotiable topics, including salary, working hours, class sizes

▼ Sen. Albert Rodda, far right, celebrates passage of SB 160 with colleagues.



and grievance procedures, while leaving broader education policy decisions to local school boards.

SB 160 also created the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), which was tasked with overseeing and enforcing the new law, handling disputes and complaints of unfair labor practices and ensuring compliance (see story on page 29 to see more on PERB).

The adoption of the Rodda Act also marked the end of school administrators being members of CTA, and in 1976, our union hired the first executive director who was not also a state superintendent of public education. — *Julian Peebles*

▼ Slide from the October 2024 State Council observance.



▼ Saundra Antonio, Alvord Educators Assn., and Naqiba Gregory at the American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus table at October State Council. Gregory is a REAC member, chair of the AI/AN Caucus and member of West Sacramento Teachers Assn.



Representation Matters

State Council observance marks
American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month

CTA's Racial Equity Affairs Committee (REAC), which monitors BIPOC representation within our union and provides BIPOC input on CTA programs and policies, marked American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month in November at CTA's October State Council with a special observance.

Through a multimedia presentation of information and facts about indigenous peoples in the United States and California, including photos and images documenting diverse tribes and customs, important historical events

and note-worthy Native Americans in the arts, government and more, the observance honored the resilience of Native peoples and their remarkable contributions to American life and culture.

REAC is composed of representatives from four CTA caucuses: American Indian/Alaska Native, African American, Hispanic and Pacific Asian American. To learn more, visit cta.org/reac. To view the presentation, go to bit.ly/CTAREAC_AIANpresentation_2024. ■



Calm in the New Year

Through CTA's partnership with Calm, you can provide free access to the Calm app for up to five of your dependents (16+ years old). Calm provides guided meditations, sleep stories, breathing exercises, relaxing music and kids' content to support mental well-being. Visit CTAMemberBenefits.org/Calm to register for your free, premium Calm subscription and for detailed instructions to share Calm with your family. Questions? Contact CTA Member Benefits at (650) 552-5200.

▼ American Indians protest their forced removal from Alcatraz.
Credit: Ilka Hartmann.



▼ A photo from the ILWU Dispatcher in March 1970 shows the welcoming party greeting the trade union delegation to Alcatraz.



▼ Credit: Dietmar Rabich/
Wikimedia Common/Alcatraz,
Barracks-2022-3087



BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT: The Occupation of Alcatraz

American Indian action 55 years ago supported by unions

NOVEMBER 2024 WAS the 55th anniversary of the Occupation of Alcatraz, a 19-month long occupation by American Indians and their supporters of Alcatraz Island (off San Francisco) and its prison complex, classified as abandoned surplus federal land. The group claimed the island in the name of "Indians of All Tribes" (IAT).

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), among other unions, supported IAT. An ILWU delegation visited Alcatraz in the winter of 1970; representatives of the Electrical Workers and American Federation of Teachers also came along.

"You folks are just like a labor union on strike," said Louis Goldblatt, ILWU secretary-treasurer and part of the delegation. "You have to last one day longer than the other guy."

While negotiations between IAT and the federal

government ultimately were not successful, the underlying goals of IAT were met: The occupation made the public aware of the plight of American Indians and their need for self-determination. As a result of the occupation, an official government policy of Indian self-determination replaced a policy of termination of Indian tribes.

During the occupation, President Nixon returned Blue Lake and 48,000 acres of land to the Taos Indians. Occupied lands near Davis, California, became home to a Native American university (since closed). The occupation of Bureau of Indian Affairs offices in Washington, D.C., led to the hiring of Native Americans to work in the federal agency that had such a great effect on their lives.

The Alcatraz occupation gave birth to a political movement that continues today. ■

Proposed CTA Bylaw Amendment

At the January 2025 State Council of Education meeting, Council will vote by written ballot on whether to adopt the following bylaw amendment. The proposed amendment is to Article VII of the bylaws to change Officer terms to three years, and to establish a two-term limit for a person's service in the same office. The proposed amendment is subject to a proviso that was presented at the October 2024 State Council of Education meeting and that is set forth below.

Legend: Additions are **in boldface**. Deletions are ~~struck through~~.

CTA Bylaw Amendment – Article VII – Officers – Section 3 – Election and Term of Office – for final consideration by written ballot at the January 2025 State Council meeting.

SECTION 3. Election and Term of Office. The election and

the terms of Executive Officers shall be as follows: The President, Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer shall be elected by the State Council of Education ~~at the meeting preceding its Annual Meeting of the Council in odd-numbered years for a two-year~~ **at the meeting preceding its Annual Meeting for a three-year** term beginning June 26th. ~~A person may be reelected to the same office for a subsequent two-year term after which at least one year must elapse before becoming eligible for reelection. A person may be reelected to the same office for a subsequent three-year term, but no person shall serve more than two full three-year terms in the same office.~~

Proviso: Current Officers, if reelected to a three-year term in 2025, may serve only that single three-year term in their respective offices.



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You Can Represent CTA at NEA's Convention

Members of CTA (including ESP), CTA Aspiring Educators and CTA/NEA-Retired who wish to run for state delegate to the 2025 NEA Convention must fill out a Declaration of Candidacy and file it by Jan. 31, 2025, no later than 4 p.m. Find the form at cta.org/nearaelection2025 (login required). The CTA Elections Committee will begin accepting state delegates' declarations of candidacy on Jan. 6, 2025. Each candidate filing a declaration will receive an electronic confirmation and a copy of their completed declaration form.

The convention, known as NEA Representative Assembly, will take place July 2-5, 2025, in Portland, OR. In keeping with CTA's commitment to minority involvement, members who are people of color are urged to become candidates.

For more information, or if your chapter has not initiated an election by March 18, 2025, contact the CTA Governance Support Department at 650-552-5300, or via email RA@cta.org.

Note: The CTA Service Center Council directory can be found on the CTA website.



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GOLDBERG	\$3,770.64
GRANADO	\$5,445.50
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JONES	\$5,080.34
LITTMAN	\$3,869.54
NORMAND	\$3,355.84
PATTERSON	\$9,221.65
RUIZ	\$7,165.85
SCHUSTER	\$4,134.42
SHEAFFER	\$3,553.89
WILLIAMS	\$5,982.45

CTA Board Expenses

Amounts represent a monthly average for fiscal year 2023–2024. During the reporting year, the normal and statewide activities include CTA Board meetings, State Council, Service Center Council meetings, Equity and Human Rights Conference, Good Teaching Conferences, various task force meetings and other business-related functions. Some differences in expenditures may be due to the widely varied geographical sizes of directorial districts, distances traveled for Regional, Service Center and other meetings, and the varied number of functions CTA Directors are responsible for attending. Expenses of Board members with partial-year service are averaged based on months served and delineated with an asterisk.

▼ CTA Board member Angela Der Ramos was among the speakers at the event.

Equity on Display

Central Coast Service Center Council showcases its work

RANCHO CIELO, an alternative school in Monterey County, was the setting for the third annual Equity Reception held by CTA's Central Coast Service Center Council and its equity team in November. Guests included CTA members who enjoyed meals prepared by students in Rancho Cielo's exceptional culinary school.

The event was a showcase for the service center, which assists local leaders with training, offers grants to attend CTA conferences, and empowers BIPOC members through equity work. CTA service centers also are conduits to information about events and programs such as NEA Representative Assembly and CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification & Development (EMEID) program.

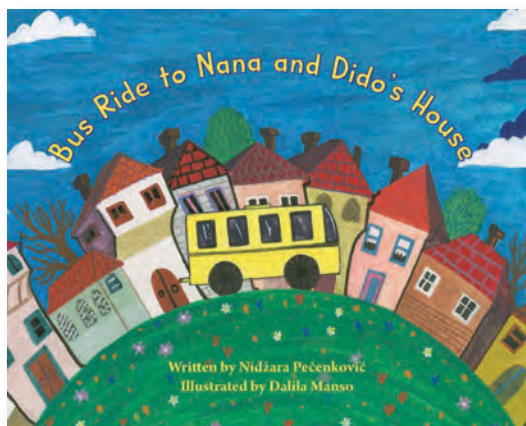
"We are continually putting on training for our local leaders," said Central Coast Service Center Chair Rosalyn Book. "This year we already held a Get Out the Vote training and a local

treasurers training." Upcoming trainings include Community Schools' budgets, school finance and special education.

The reception was an opportunity to spotlight Rancho Cielo as well. In addition to the culinary school, Rancho Cielo boasts vocational programs like Agricultural Engineering and Construction (students were featured in the news for constructing small homes for the homeless). ■



Lit From Within Continued from Page 48



Window to the Past

English professor and member of the Faculty Association of Rancho Santiago Community College District Nidžara Pečenović has written her first picture book, *Bus Ride to Nana and Dido's House*. Inspired by the author's hometown Bihać and illustrated by Bosnian artist Dalila Manso, the book tells of the adventures of a young boy as he travels by bus to visit his grandparents. Through the window he observes vibrant scenes of his family's Bosnian hometown. Told in Bosnian and English, the story will delight children of all ages and touch the hearts of adults who have left their homeland behind.



Lit From Within

Often educators' creativity spills over into a book, album, blog or vlog, or other work. We showcase our members' talents:

Compiled by **Amy Peruzzaro**

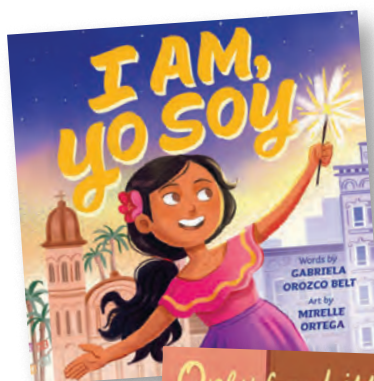
▶ Igniting Creative Minds

Fifth grade teacher and Newhall Teachers Association member Charlene Keleshian-Andersson has written *The Creative Adventures of the Brainstorm Buddies*, a book that inspires young minds to embrace creativity and innovation. Through a heartwarming story of friendship and problem-solving, older elementary children are encouraged to explore STEM concepts and bring their ideas to life. The book includes interactive activities and a unique opportunity to file a provisional patent application, empowering young inventors to become trailblazers and change-makers.



▶ Small Town Memories

An educator and head coach for more than 40 years, retired Hart District Teachers Association member Jim Ozella was raised in Ingalls Park, Illinois, where he learned the values of community, friendship and family. *The Greatest Time to Be a Kid: Stories of Unexpected Adventure* transports the reader back to the 1960s, a time of innocence and endless possibilities for a young boy nicknamed "Jimmy O." Middle and high school readers experience the joys of summer vacation, from bike rides to baseball games. Ozella's nostalgic storytelling paints a vivid picture of small-town America, where community and family bonds are strong. This glimpse into a simpler time reminds us of the importance of cherishing life's little moments.



▶ Family Bonds, Cultural Pride

High school English teacher and Needles Teachers Association member Gabriela Orozco Belt has written two picture books, *Only for a Little While* (available in both English and Spanish editions) and *I Am, Yo Soy*, publishing in March. Both books are for Pre-K-3 readers and explore the themes of family, culture and identity. *Only for a Little While* highlights the resilience of family bonds as a young girl navigates a temporary change in her living situation. With text in both English and Spanish, *I Am, Yo Soy* celebrates biculturalism, emphasizing the unique beauty of being part of two cultures. Both stories offer heartwarming messages of love, acceptance and the power of embracing one's heritage. Read more about Belt's work at gabrielabelt.com.

Continued on Page 47

Got something for this page? Tell us at cta.org with "Lit From Within" in the subject line. Check out past issues at cta.org/lit.

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