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SUMMER 2024 VOLUME 28 ISSUE 6

Celebrating our Union's Power and Victories in 2023–24

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#### #WeAre OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

#### **MAGA7INF**

#### DIGITAL

**SMALL LOCALS. BIG IMPACT** How McFarland Teachers Assn. and Camino Faculty Assn. strategized, organized and won. PAGES 15 and 20,

#### COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

respectively.

#### WEEK OF MANY ACTIONS

Chapters across the state showed their support for, showcased their community schools. PAGE 22 🚹 💟 🔯 cta.org/communityschools

#### **RISING UP AGAINST RIFS**

Union, students and community fight to keep pink-slipped teachers at a San Diego middle school. PAGE 32

#### LGBTO+ SUPPORT

Take action to protect fully resourced and supportive schools for LGBTQ+ students and educators at bit.ly/LGBTQpledge.

#### MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Urge legislators to pass the Paid Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act and to eliminate unnecessary Teaching Performance Assessments. cta.org/takeaction

#### **OUR LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY**

View our union's position on all bills, including sponsored legislation. cta.org/ legislative-advocacy

#### PROFESSIONAL **DFVFI OPMENT**

#### SUMMER TRAININGS

Hone your skills, network with peers at CTA's Summer Institute, July 24-28 in LA, and other educator conferences. #CTASI



#### **NATIONAL BOARDS**

CTA offers multiday workshops for those new to or continuing the National **Board Certified Teacher** process, July 15-17 in Natomas; July 24-28 in LA, BIPOC educators can also join supportive NBCT programs that meet during the school year. 🕤 💙 🞯 **E** cta.org/nbct



#### TRAVEL DEALS

CTA Access to Savings offers member discounts on family getaways, staycations, overseas adventures and last-minute trips. Book now! **CTAMemberBenefits.org** 

#### **BE A SAVVY SHOPPER**

Find special pricing on apparel, home goods, electronics, jewelry, office supplies and more at CTA Access to Savings. **CTAMemberBenefits.org** 

Photo: Whittier Elementary Teachers Assn. - currently at impasse with the district in contract negotiations - won an agreement on community schools. Story on Page 12.





Celebrating our union's power and victories in 2023-24





## Forward! Our Victories

Unbreakable solidarity fuels wins across the state PAGE 6

#### Community Schools on the Rise

CTA chapters show strength during a week of action PAGE 22



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Clockwise from left: Fresno Teachers Assn. rally, Paso Robles Public Educators push for a meaningful contract, Hart District Teachers Assn. members speak up; Mountain View Teachers Assn. (LA County) supports Community Schools.

#### Cover:

CTA's delegation at the 2023 NEA Representative Assembly.



#### WELCOME TO OUR **SPECIAL ISSUE!**

Summer is the perfect time to celebrate and reflect on our incredible organizing campaigns and victories from the past school year. Our tremendous organizing, mobilizing and victories are worth our reflection and recognition – not only for posterity, but also for lessons learned and best practices as we move forward.

This **#UnionStrong** issue celebrates the gains we made in 2023-24 and looks to a brighter future where our students, educators and communities have fully funded and fully staffed public schools in every neighborhood across California.

#### Autism Acceptance

I'm a proud autistic educator. Thank you for including the neurodivergent infinity sign and the term "acceptance" instead of "awareness"

[Autism Acceptance Month, April/May 2024]. Both choices affirm pride in autistic identities and should be common.

[But] using statistics from the CDC contributes to the misconception that autism is a disease. Autism is a neurotype, or brain structure. You can compare an autistic brain to an allistic (non-autistic) brain the same way you compare an Android to an iPhone. Different hardware, same purpose.

[Most] autistic people use identify-first language over person-first language (autistic person, not person with autism). The reasoning is that person-first language is only ever used for illnesses, not for aspects of identity.

I recommend Autistic Self Advocacy Network and Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network [for] those wishing to learn more. They are run by and for autistic people and advocate for disability rights through an intersectional lens.

#### TARA FAY

United Teachers of Richmond



#### Eliminate the TPA

I'm a long-time, highly successful California educator, and I find the Teaching Performance Assessment [TPA] to be a complete insult to the profession I love. It proves nothing and acts only as a deterrent to students who might otherwise become teachers.

I became a teacher 27 years ago by completing the credentialing program at CSU Chico. Requirements included completion of student teaching and coursework. I became aware of the TPA in 2021 when my own child entered the CSU Chico credential program. I have heard that the TPA's purpose was to demonstrate teaching standards. However, all I ever witnessed was extreme stress, feelings of confusion and failure, and utter disappointment when scores came back with comments that made absolutely no sense.

I support the elimination of the TPA.

#### WENDY HAMASAKI

Western Placer Teachers Assn.

Editor's note: CTA is cosponsor of SB 1263 (Newman). which would eliminate TPAs in California. Take action and learn more at cta.org/tpa.

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#WeAreCTA



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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.

#### **EDITORIAL INFORMATION**

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.

Publication of advertising in the California Educator does not indicate CTA approval of the product or of the companies that purchase advertising.

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2023, to Aug. 31, 2024) are \$994, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see cta.org/contribution for details). \$22.98 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 \$37.98 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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California Educator Volume 28, Issue 6, June / July 2024 California Educator (ISSN 1091-6148) is published in August, October, December, February, April and June by: California Teachers Association, 1705 Murchison Dr., Burlingame, CA 94010-4583, Periodicals Postage Paid at Burlingame, CA. and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to California Educator, P.O. Box 4178, Burlingame, CA 94011-4178.



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**BEING PART OF A UNION** means that collectively we can accomplish so much more for the good of public education and our colleagues than any of us could ever achieve individually. Looking back on the past school year, I think we have much to be proud of as CTA members stood strong and organized together for each other and their students.

Up and down the state, educators believed in each other, they believed in their union, and they demanded their school districts to deliver more for students and for the profession. Whether it was in campaigns for strong contracts, or in fighting for human rights and social justice, collective action delivered real results that will have lasting impacts for our students and communities. Dozens of

chapters participated in the first statewide Week of Action for Community Schools. CTA members organized across school sites and school districts to raise awareness about Community Schools and demand shared governance from district administrators. Several chapters worked together on their actions. This unity is going to be critical in the months and years ahead as we continue the fight for Community Schools and the future of public education.

We also saw powerful examples at the state level of members coming together to demand change. CTA-sponsored legislation for paid pregnancy leave for educators and for eliminating the California Teaching Performance Assessments (CalTPAs) have overcome major hurdles and are making their way through the Legislature. Thousands of letters with personal stories from CTA members to lawmakers and our lobby days at the Capitol have been critical to ensuring these bills continue to move forward.

One of the biggest fights we faced together this year was the state budget. In the face of a multibillion-dollar revenue shortfall,



Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed to reduce guaranteed education funding from Proposition 98. But we fought back and we refused to back down. Ultimately, CTA was able to reach an agreement with the Newsom administration. The successes this year put us in a stronger position

"We're a union that knows how to win, and **we have the** collective power of 310,000 members to move forward."

for the challenges we face as we move forward together. We all know that our schools remain underfunded, and we need to keep up our fight to maintain and increase the resources invested in our classrooms. California corporations now pay 50% less in taxes than they did just a few decades ago. Those tax breaks are part of the budget problem, and they

make CEOs and billionaires even wealthier on the backs of our students. CTA will fight for corporations and the wealthy to pay their fair share and we will continue to do everything in our power to ensure our students and schools get the funding they deserve.

Those challenges are surmountable because we're a union that knows how to win, and we have the collective power of 310,000 members to move forward. I'm proud of what each of you has accomplished for each other and for your students this year; I hope you have a restful summer as we gear up to meet the opportunities and challenges of the coming school year.

#### David B. Goldberg

CTA PRESIDENT



Educators in CTA local associations across the state have been organizing and winning the resources their schools need and students deserve.

## The Power of Our Union

#### Unbreakable solidarity fuels victories across the state

By Julian Peeples

**AT SCHOOLS ACROSS** California, the inspiring power and momentum of last year's Hot Labor Summer continued seamlessly into the 2023–24 school year, with educators standing together in their locals for their students and each other.

Our collective strength as CTA is built on our unity-fueled victories in our local associations. When we are committed to each other and willing to put it on the line together for our students and communities, we create change in our school districts and build the power needed to win elections and move legislation in the Capitol.

Here is a collection of 2023–24 victories and ongoing struggles in local associations across CTA that illustrate just how much we can accomplish for our schools and communities when we fight together.

#### **CTA's Four Regions**





#### CONTRA COSTA COUNTY SCHOOLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION:

Smaller class sizes and student success were the rallying cries for CCCSEA members organizing and fighting for a new contract. The local won a new twoyear agreement in May.

#### **REGION I**



ASSOCIATION OF PLEASANTON TEACHERS: Educator unity is unstoppable! APT members authorized a strike and were ready to walk the line for the best resources for their students and community — when they won, reaching an agreement in March just days before planning to go on strike.



#### DUBLIN TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

Nearly 100% of DTA members voted to authorize a strike for the resources Dublin students need. The movement they built with their families and community powered a contract victory in March that will help recruit and retain educators in all Dublin schools.

#### CTA-BERRYESSA:

After more than a year of difficult negotiations, CTA-Berryessa members remained united for the best for Berryessa students, winning a new contract in December.



#### EAST BAY COALITION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS:

Solidarity rocks! The nearly 20 CTA locals in the East Bay Coalition for Student Success had a busy year, with multiple locals approving strike votes and winning for their students. Organizing continues, with five coalition locals potentially on strike to start the new school year if districts won't invest in student success.



FAIRFIELD-SUISUN UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION: Recruiting and retaining the educators that Fairfield-Suisun students deserve is the top priority for FSUTA members, who have organized and rallied in support of their lengthy bargain.



#### HARTNELL COLLEGE FACULTY ASSOCIATION:

Months of deep organizing and a marathon 16-hour bargaining session ended in a major victory for HCFA members in mid-December. They won health care for adjunct faculty, a pay increase and other resources to recruit and retain educators.



#### OLD ADOBE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

Members of the small but mighty OATA were ready to strike for each other and their students last fall, organizing and winning a new contract that includes increases to pay and health care benefits, so educators can stay in Old Adobe.



#### PITTSBURG EDUCATION ASSOCIATION:

After 19 hours of bargaining, Pittsburg educators in April won a contract that was months of deep organizing in the making. Among the victories: resources to recruit and retain educators and a community schools agreement (MOU)!



UNITED EDUCATORS OF SAN FRANCISCO: UESF members voted to authorize a strike and won a huge contract victory in October rooted in equity that will see no education support professional in San Francisco Unified earn less than \$30 an hour, as well as pay increases for educators and substitute teachers.



#### SAUSALITO DISTRICT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

The power of the strike was on display in Sausalito-Marin City, when SDTA members unanimously authorized a strike after 10 months of bargaining and won! Educators stood united and in October won a 13.57% pay increase, fully paid health care and binding arbitration, among other victories.



#### **Educator Housing**

#### LOS ALTOS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION & PALO ALTO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION:

Some LATA and PAEA members will be able to live where they work thanks to teacher housing currently under construction in Palo Alto as part of a public-private partnership between four school districts, Santa Clara County and social media giant Meta. When completed (estimated 2025), 110 housing units will be set aside for educators from Palo Alto Unified, Los Altos, Mountain View Whisman and Foothill-De Anza Community College districts.

→

#### Feature

#### **REGION II**



#### COALINGA-HURON UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

The Central Valley was hot with solidarity this spring, as 96.5% of CHUTA members authorized a strike, helping push them to victory at the bargaining table. Educators won resources to recruit and retain educators and stem ongoing churn that harms students and communities.



#### FRESNO TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

FTA members won a historic contract in October for their students and community following a massive organizing campaign that saw more than 3,400 members rally in 90-plus degree heat for the opening of their strike authorization vote. With FTA's dedication to the resources **#EveryFresnoStudent** deserved, FTA reached agreement with the district just a day before educators were set to walk picket lines.



FARMERSVILLE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION: Following a 99% strike authorization in spring, FTA

members were ready to walk picket lines for their students — and won a contract that helps provide the resources that all Farmersville students deserve.



#### SACRAMENTO CITY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

Building upon major victories following their successful 2022 strike, SCTA won a successor contract in February — lowering class sizes in grades 4–12, increasing educator pay, hiring more school nurses and librarians, and much more.

#### MCFARLAND TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

The 160 members of MTA rallied their entire community, building a movement for public schools and winning a contract in February that will help keep great teachers in McFarland.

#### SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS Fighting Extremism

#### ROCKLIN TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION:

RTPA members supported their students and defended their right to negotiate safe, supportive teaching and learning conditions, asking the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) to order Rocklin Unified School District to rescind its "forced outing" policy that targets LGBTQ+ youth. California Department of Education also found that the district violated Ed Code, and the district ceased implementation of the policy. "Our students are our top priority," RTPA President Travis Mougeotte said.



#### SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

**Community Schools** 

#### LOS BANOS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

Los Banos educators are all-in for the transformative power of community schools for their students and families. LBTA leadership adopted a resolution of support for community schools and is actively working to reach an agreement outlining the shared leadership structures that make these schools successful, holding a community forum in late April.

#### **REGION III**



#### GLENDALE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

GTA members joined community groups and elected officials in January to speak out against the hate and extremism creeping into Glendale public schools, which exploded into violence at a 2023 school board meeting. GTA leaders are leading the fight to create safer schools in Glendale for students and educators. They scored a major victory in March when they elected educator Telly Tse to the Glendale School Board. Amid all of this, GTA continues work to reach a fair wage settlement.



HART DISTRICT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

After months of contentious negotiations, HDTA members organized to reach a contract agreement in March, winning resources to recruit and retain the educators that Santa Clarita students deserve.

#### Feature



#### PASO ROBLES PUBLIC EDUCATORS: PRPE members rallied and built power to end the school year on a powerful note, winning a 5% pay increase and a stipend for bilingual educators in May.



#### UNITED TEACHERS LOS ANGELES:

UTLA members rallied with SEIU Local 99 members in early May to demand the Los Angeles Unified School Board and Superintendent Alberto Carvalho reverse \$6.3 billion in cuts that will have devastating impacts on students. The **#CarvalhoCuts** will mean less time for social emotional support for students; less help in the classroom; fewer arts, dance, music and elective programs; and less staff to keep schools safe and clean, among many impacts.



#### SANTA BARBARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

SBTA members have been building a movement for the schools their students deserve, marching through the streets of Santa Barbara to demand safer teaching and learning conditions. SBTA completed mediation in April and members continue to organize to win the resources their public schools need.



#### **Community Schools**

#### WHITTIER ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

In October, WETA members won an agreement with the Whittier City School District on the staffing and infrastructure needs to build and support quality community schools. The agreement also outlines shared leadership structures to facilitate collaboration in the community schools process and oversight so that all students can thrive. WETA is currently at impasse with the district in its contract bargain.



#### SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

**Fighting Extremism** 

#### ASSOCIATED CHINO TEACHERS:

ACT members have shown exactly how to fight back when extremists take over a school board: together, in our union and with fierce righteousness in defense of our students and each other. Educators organized when an extremist majority of the school board banned books and Pride flags, seeking headlines on Fox News instead of focusing on education for Chino students. ACT also won a new contract in the spring.

#### **REGION IV**



#### BREA OLINDA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

BOTA members built a movement for Brea Olinda schools, rallying with parents and community for the resources to recruit and retain quality educators. BOTA built the power to make their "four is fair" rallying cry (for a 4% salary increase) a reality, winning an agreement in early May.



#### CAPISTRANO UNIFIED EDUCATION ASSOCIATION:

In the spring, CUEA members organized and won six weeks of paid maternity leave — the first in Orange County to negotiate it — along with a stipend for special education teachers and a pay increase.



#### CHULA VISTA EDUCATORS:

In December, CVE members organized and won the largest pay increase in their union's history — 12% over two years — to help recruit and retain the educators all Chula Vista students deserve.

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#### Feature



#### ORANGE UNIFIED EDUCATION ASSOCIATION:

OUEA members took their fight against two extremist school board members to the ballot, helping to build a community coalition to recall the extremists and take back their school board. In March, both of the board members were recalled.



#### Fighting Extremism

#### TEMECULA VALLEY EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION:

In August, TVEA members stood together to fight curriculum censorship in Temecula schools, joining a lawsuit against the school board that brought culture wars and chaos to their award-winning school district.



#### SADDLEBACK VALLEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION:

SVEA reached agreement in late October on a contract that will improve teaching and learning conditions in Saddleback Valley schools and help recruit and retain quality educators. SVEA also successfully petitioned to add 80 speech language pathologists, school psychologists and mental health counselors into the union.



#### SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS Showing Solidarity

#### FRESNO TEACHERS ASSOCIATION:

When 3,500-plus educators in Portland Association of Teachers walked out of classrooms and onto picket lines on Nov. 1 last year they were ready to put it all on the line for their students, but no one knew they would be out until Nov. 26 to win the teaching and learning conditions their students deserve. **Fresno Teachers Association** President Manuel Bonilla felt a kinship with PAT President Angela Bonilla, sharing not only a surname but a strike date. After FTA reached a tentative agreement on Oct. 30, Manuel Bonilla sent a message of educator solidarity that was texted to all PAT members on the eve of their historic strike.



McFarland family and community members and educators picket outside district offices.

## McFarland Educators Get Organized

With the help of CTA grants, local leaders mobilize members to win a new contract

**IN FEBRUARY,** the small but mighty McFarland Teachers Association (MTA) successfully bargained a contract with their district that helps retain great teachers, attracts new and experienced teachers, and improves working conditions so that educators have the time and resources to do their job.

The executive board of MTA, which has approximately 160 members, started their contract campaign in 2023. The local used a series of CTA organizing grants to identify members' key issues, plan strategically, make critical site visits, engage members in one-on-one conversations and formulate a thoughtful plan of action.

Specifically, MTA received a site visit grant, which

provided release time to conduct a site visit program, and a planning grant, which covered release time/meeting expenses for chapter representatives' full day to work. (The work took place in Spring and Fall 2023, respectively.) MTA President Kim Whealy-Kennemer also received a local president release time grant in 2023.

"I was able to go to every site and meet with members," said Whealy-Kennemer. "I was able to get commitments from members and get a temperature check on how people felt about negotiations — we went to impasse, then fact-finding but were able to reach a fair settlement by returning to a second round of mediation."

MTA's organizing plan touched all members, making them

#### Feature

MTA President Kim Whealy-Kennemer, at left, on the line.



#### **CTA Organizing Grants**

Local leaders can visit **cta.org** to learn more about CTA grants. Click on Leader Resources and then "Local Chapter Grant Programs." Among the grants:

- Site Visit grants, which cover release time for local unions to conduct local site visits; these visits should center around local priorities such as asking unit members to join the union, preparing for bargaining and organizing to win a strong contract, school board elections, a community schools campaign, etc.
- **Planning grants**, which cover release time or meeting expenses for local executive boards to hold a local planning session
- Local President Release Time grants, for local presidents to lead and carry out site-based organizing within their chapter; release time is by formula, depending on individual's existing release time, and have benefited many chapters.



#### What MTA Won

Among the gains in the new contract:

- 4% on the salary schedule (ongoing) retroactive to July 1, 2023 (from 2% on schedule)
- 1.5% on the salary schedule (ongoing) beginning July 1, 2024
- Health & welfare fully covered for years 23–24 and 24–25
- Longevity will begin at 10 years at \$1,000 with an additional \$500 every 5 years

#### "I was able to go to every site and meet with members. I was able to get commitments from members and get a temperature check on how people felt about negotiations."

-MTA President Kim Whealy-Kennemer

feel seen and invested in their union. MTA's actions, which included a rally, demonstrated educators' collective power at a critical point in negotiations and propelled them to a settlement during impasse mediation.

Whealy-Kennemer credits CTA with important assistance. "CTA helped create strategy and an organizing team, which included a couple people from our negotiations team as well as some of our up-and-comers who will eventually lead the union."

Whealy-Kennemer, who has been MTA president since 2018, has been approved for a president's release time grant again next year. She and MTA hope to develop strategies to retain educators and engage them more fully in union work. MTA has 174 educators in its bargaining unit, of which 91% are members. But retention is a big problem.

"Our population has 30–40 people who are new; only 58% stay beyond three or four years," she said. "Every year we have to re-recruit."

But she is excited about newer educators' contributions to MTA and optimistic about their long-term impact. "Our organizing team has benefited tremendously from the younger people in our union. They have energy, and the audacity to question things that [veteran educators] accept as 'normal.' We need the blend, we have to trust that they can build this power." ■

## Victories at the Ballot Box

How courageous locals won big in March and June

**MULTIPLE CTA LOCALS** savored victories in the March Primary Election, electing pro-public education candidates to school boards, helping pass parcel taxes to fund essential school and district programs, and more.

While both big and small, urban and suburban locals worked hard to mobilize members and voters, the throughline for all was courage: The courage to stand up and advocate for what is right, and to call out what is not. The courage to confront tough issues and jump into tough races; and to not be afraid to assert their power in the interests of students, schools and educators.

Much of the work, of course, involved local members coming together to take action — to gather signatures, knock on doors, make phone calls, mail postcards and help raise visibility and funds. It also meant establishing alliances with community partners and elected officials, and talking to parents and others in the community about positive change that would make schools and communities stronger and more equitable.

Some locals have been engaged in struggles with extremist school boards and groups for a while. Others — sometimes smaller or more remote — are in areas where dynamic unionism is less expected but has been embraced. Their successes are paving the way for chapters currently building the structures and supports they'll need for upcoming elections in June, November and beyond.

A few examples:

GTA members call for action.



### Glendale: Coalition-building makes the difference

For the past few years, Glendale Teachers Association leaders and members have built effective coalitions with their community, including elected officials and local leaders, and numerous labor and health care partners. These strategic alliances have stood up to a wave of hate, bigotry and disinformation that saw educators receive threats of physical harm, an increase in bullying among students, and violence when Proud Boy extremists chased pride supporters out of a Glendale Unified School District board meeting. Their success was capped in the March Primary when voters elected former CTA board member Telly Tse and another GTA-endorsed candidate to the school board. The pair joined UTLA/CTA member Ingrid Gunnell, an incumbent on the board.

"Our PAC committee, chaired by GTA Vice President Emily Rogers, ran a very successful campaign," explained GTA President Taline Arsenian. "We had a consistent and solid group of members showing up weekly to phone bank on Wednesdays and canvass door-to-door on Saturdays. We made several thousand phone calls and visited hundreds of homes. Our PAC sent out six mailers to voters in support of each candidate in the two election areas."

Arsenian says GTA, with 1,215 members, also relied on external help. "Because teachers are working

Continued on Page 18

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#### Continued from Page 17

for most of the day, we also had paid canvassers and phone callers in addition to a paid digital campaign. We were lucky enough to be awarded CTA ABC funds and a CTA special circumstances grant that doubled our PAC budget."

In addition, the Los Angeles LGBT Center had reached out to GTA early in the school year after bigoted comments at public school meetings and attacks on state-approved LGBTO+ inclusive curriculum became known. "We all shared a sincere concern for the safety of our LGBTQ staff, students and community members," said Arsenian. "It was important for the center to organize a campaign to promote understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ+ folks in our community. They focused their canvassers in the two areas that had open seats for the school board."

Coalition-building by Arsenian and GTA had started much earlier, resulting in strong relationships based on common goals and a united front. Arsenian notes that "many local organizations, like the NUHW, the LA Federation of Labor, CSEA, Equality California, Southern California Armenian Democrats, East Area Progressives, the LA County Democratic Party, Glendale College Guild-AFT Local 2276, Glendale Democratic Club, glendaleOut, the Iranian-American Democrats of CA, Planned Parenthood, GUSD Parents for Public Schools and more all endorsed our endorsed candidates."

As recently as January, GTA, NUHW, parents, students, local and state lawmakers and LGBTQ+ support groups held a news conference to denounce the ugly climate of hatred and fear in their community, and to promote inclusivity. "Our community and especially our schools are for everyone," Arsenian said at the event. ▼ DTA President Victor Lagunes, right, with a Davis firefighter.



#### Davis teachers help renew a parcel tax to boost education

Parcel taxes are one of the few sources of funding for school districts to supplement state or local funding. But because Proposition 13 bans tax increases based on a property's value, parcel taxes must be a uniform amount per property, regardless of whether it's a cottage, an apartment building or multi-room mansion. Parcel taxes also require 2/3rds of the vote to pass, as opposed to, for example, bond measures that require a simple majority.

So while Davis Teachers Association, with 500 members, supported the renewal of a parcel tax that funds 10% of the school district's budget, its leadership anticipated opposition. "Opponents wanted to remove the clause that specified no expiration date, to make it an evergreen parcel tax so there would be no need to renew every four or eight years," said DTA President Victor Lagunes. "And even though Davis is an education-focused town, we have a local chapter of Moms for Liberty that is actively spreading harmful rhetoric about our students and schools."

DTA went to work in November immediately after Measure N was certified for the ballot, informing the community about the need to vote yes and building effective partnerships. "We were at the local farmers market week in week out with a crew talking to people, passing out flyers, getting commitments," Lagunes said. "We knocked on or dropped literature at thousands of doors across Davis. We had a lot of people writing letters to the editor and submitting video to Davis Media Access about our 'Yes' campaign.

"We attended all PTO, PTA, Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club meetings. We got endorsements from each PTO/PTA to demonstrate support on our mailers." They also reached out to community groups and former and current legislators for their endorsement, including from former state superintendent of public schools Delaine Easton.

"The number of DTA's member volunteers — the actual workforce we brought to the campaign where teachers were actively promoting the importance of parcel tax funds for students and education — got a lot of visibility," said Lagunes. "The standpoint of doing what was right for students gave us credibility."

He credited earlier chapter efforts for the Measure N victory. "DTA has grown in its capacity to take political action over the last six-to-eight years. We've put in the time to build relationships with community. We go through pains to ensure that we are truly doing the will of our members and making sure everyone is informed and participates in the decisions we make. By the time we made the decision to support Measure N, I was certain we had members' buy-in." Below, TRUE members support Sascha Vogt.



#### **TRUE** votes out corruption

Twin Rivers United Educators (TRUE) outside of Sacramento worked hard to unseat a corrupt, longtime school board trustee. In January, local news outlet ABC10 aired a 10-part investigative report that found a lack of transparency and oversight by the Twin Rivers school board and the board of one of its charter schools had resulted in misuse of funds. In addition, Linda Fowler, a Twin Rivers trustee since 1971 who also served on the charter's board and had been instrumental in its 2014 founding, had been paid a hefty consulting fee; the state Fair Political Practices Commission said this was a conflict of interest. Fowler left the board but continued to draw a salary as a charter school employee for work the report found questionable. She also continued to be re-elected to the school board until TRUE mobilized members and community for the March Primary. TRUE's endorsed candidate, Sascha Vogt, ousted Linda Fowler, and won with 55% of the vote.

In the wake of the ABC10 report, members of the California legislature have requested an audit of the charter school, its online division and foundation, and the Twin Rivers Unified School District. Watch the report at **bit.ly/HighlandsCharterSchool**.

#### **Orange educators recall extremists**

Orange Unified Education Association members joined their community to recall two conservative school board members, including the board president.

In the fall, a board majority had approved an illegal and harmful forced-outing policy. (Similar policies have been passed by governing boards in Anderson in Shasta County, Chino, Murrieta, Rocklin and Temecula.) The recall effort began

in January 2023 when the board majority fired the school superintendent and placed an assistant superintendent on paid leave without explanation and over the objections of many in the school community. It heated up when volunteers collected signatures to qualify the recall for the ballot; they attended festivals, stationed themselves outside schools



TVEA educators demand a board change.

#### Temecula's critical June election

On June 4, Temecula Valley residents cast their ballot in a recall election of Joseph Komrosky, Temecula Valley Unified School District board president. The Temecula Valley Educators Association and One Temecula Valley PAC led efforts to recall the extremist. At press time, Komrosky was trailing by a narrow margin.

"Temecula active and retired educators [have been] knocking on doors, making phone calls, rallying on corners to spread the word that student success is not a priority with this board," said Edgar Díaz, TVEA president, of member efforts in the recall.

Komrosky, current trustee Jennifer Wiersma and former trustee Danny Gonzalez have been criticized in the past year and a half for banning Critical Race Theory, censoring instruction of California's LGBTQ+ rights movement, supporting a forced outing policy, firing the superintendent, and more. After multiple educators and students were targeted and harassed for speaking out, TVEA joined a lawsuit in August against the school district for censoring instruction.

(Gonzalez resigned in December; his seat will be filled in the November election.)

 OUEA helped hold the school board accountable.



and went door to door. Three hundred volunteer signature collectors signed a code of ethics, committing to acting in good faith and staying true to the campaign message. Teachers, many of whom live in the district, were among the canvassers.

OUEA President Greg

Goodlander told the Orange County Register that the union's message of "collaboration with parents to end the corruption and chaos" resonated with voters. In November's general election, when more school board seats are on the ballot, he said, "I do not believe parents and teachers are done being involved in our school governance." Camino Faculty Assn. members and supporters.



## **CAMINO UNITED FOR STUDENTS**

How a small chapter organized a community to win big changes for their students

#### By Karmen Lee Ortloff

**IT STARTED IN** November with a district-leaked, closed-session video of leaders speaking in degrading terms about school staff and PTO activists and ended with the resignations of a superintendent and four school board members.

"We received a tip that the district posted a recording of a closed-session meeting, so we were able to hear our superintendent, board members, chief budget officer and more saying horrific things about staff and parent leaders. We had to prepare those that were talked about before they watched because it was really hurtful," said Camino Faculty Association (CFA) President Cora Dillard.

The small community of Camino is a one-school district of less than 450 students in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains. CFA counts just 26 members. The local had already been organizing with community leaders (efforts that resulted in a 10% investment in teacher salaries last year), so when the video leaked, its word-of-mouth meeting in Dillard's classroom was packed with parents, grandparents, teachers and other staff. The first order of business: unifying the community by formalizing a coalition.

"Camino United for Students (CUFS) was born with a mission

of delivering 'School Leadership Our Students Deserve.' We made sure to frame students at the center of everything we do," reported Dillard. The community sought guidance on how to hold district leadership accountable, which required a new school board and superintendent. "Some in the audience were skeptical we could make it all happen."

Community members packed the next board meeting in November with CUFS-branded signs demanding resignations. Board meetings were usually held in the school cafeteria but knowing a crowd was inevitable, the district switched the location to a tiny, difficult-to-find portable at the back of campus with space for 15 chairs.

Attendees quickly stacked chairs to accommodate the standing-room-only crowd. What followed were hours of parents and staff sharing stories of abusive behavior by the superintendent, which the board's inaction tacitly approved by way of no consequences.

"It was very emotional and raw. Parents and staff got up and shared their experiences: the superintendent asking a middle school girl her sexual orientation (because she courageously reported a student threat to kill all gay students); threatening ▼ Camino Faculty Assn. members at work.



a group of 6th graders on the first day of school by telling them that if they disrespect him, he will disrespect worse; and more. It was unbelievable and heartbreaking."

Recordings of a few testimonials were spliced together with examples of emotional intelligence, for example, to demonstrate the long-term damage the Superintendent's actions were causing the students and the community. In one video, the PTO president, who was disparaged in the leaked video for her solidarity with her children's teachers, bravely recounted how she was sexually harassed by the superintendent and gaslit when she

complained. The video spliced her testimony together with a YouTube video on gaslighting and superintendent emails to show evidence of the damage being wrought on the community.

The CUFS Facebook page exploded. The videos received thousands of views and as the coalition gained strength, activists found their collective voice.

Dillard led the community in a process to surface the values they want in a school board member and to generate a list of board com-

mitments: meet with school staff and the PTO regularly, be on campus regularly, and run in the fall election.

"Our board president resigned first and we had a CUFS coalition meeting. A spectacular PTO volunteer stepped forward. We helped her get appointed to the board in January with videos highlighting her background and commitment to our school, provided workshops on school finance and other information to prepare her and she won," said Dillard.

Continued community pressure at board meetings, on social media, and even the local newspaper helped force out both the superintendent and next board president. "I was at the CTA Issues Conference in Las Vegas. Early Saturday morning, watching the special board meeting in the convention hallway, I screamed when they announced the resignations!"

Everything happened quickly afterwards: CUFS held several more meetings to identify and support more candidates by CFA President Cora Dillard.



consensus as board resignations occurred. In the end, the coalition was able to win the appointment of four new "CommUNITY Board Members," as they are known in Camino.

Immediately after a majority of CommUNITY Board Members were sworn in, they voted to fire the law firm bleeding the district with legal fees. In an attempt to punish teachers, the previous board illegally reduced CFA's 20-minute board presentation time to three.

Because four board seats were appointed, all will be up for election this fall. CFA and CUFS will organize and work to

> defend seats and win the last remaining seat. In the meantime, one of the most important responsibilities of the board — selection of a new superintendent — is in the trusted hands of CommUNITY Board Members. Hope and renewal have replaced dread and stress on campus.

> "I grew up here, Camino made me," emphasized Dillard. "My children go to this school. I was not going to give it up without a fight.

> A CTA community engagement grant

supported CUFS with food and childcare so families could participate in actions. But we didn't have paid release time. We are a small chapter, but our community has a huge heart and when we organize for our students, we all win!"

Dillard was a selected presenter at the NEA National Leadership Summit in Chicago in March to share CFA's successes and inspire educators nationally to build power.

Said CTA Board Member Mike Patterson by video to the packed audience, "Camino is a model for small rural chapters across the nation on how to organize, how to get your parents and community behind you, and do the right thing for your students." ■

Follow Camino United for Students on Facebook: facebook.com/61553478551482

"We are a small chapter, but our community has a huge heart and when we organize for our students, we all win!"

-Camino Faculty Association President Cora Dillard

#### Advocacy





CTA locals boost Community Schools from all corners of California Mountain View Teachers Association, in LA County, held a social event to celebrate Community Schools.



**ACROSS CALIFORNIA**, educators, students and families are working together to transform public education with Community Schools.

To raise visibility and build local power and capacity for Community Schools, 47 CTA locals took part in the first statewide week of action, April 22–26.

While each Community School is different, as they draw on the unique strengths of a neighborhood to address students' unique needs, they are all based on shared decision-making. These schools involve genuine and authentic collaboration by all

stakeholders to serve both students and communities in the best possible ways.

"The model of Community Schools is a bottom-up, anti-racist model, a democratic model," said CTA President David Goldberg. "It's a model that builds power with community, that brings broader issues of the common good to the table." Along with collaborative leadership, Community

"The Community

Schools model builds

power with community

and brings broader

issues of the common

good to the table."

-CTA President

**David Goldberg** 

Schools strive for deep family engagement systems and innovative, culturally relevant teaching practices to build the foundations for true transformational change within schools and communities.

California has committed \$4.1 billion dollars for Community Schools, meaning one in every four schools in the state will become a Community School in the next 10 years.

Actions during the week in April were varied since the Community Schools movement

is at different stages in different areas. They included chapter outreach to parents and community members; chapters organizing and taking actions together with other chapters; local schools holding "open houses" for policymakers and community members; and much more. A roundup:

#### ▼ A show of support by UESF educators.

DEL



#### UNITED EDUCATORS OF SAN FRANCISCO

 met with school board members and held Community Schools event; created videos with Community Schools leaders



#### **REGION 1**

#### FAIRFIELD-SUISUN UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSN.

 –campaigned to bargain for Community Schools language in contract, including petition; created "FSUTA Takin' It to the Streets"

#### OAK GROVE EDUCATORS ASSN.

-submitted petition to school board to bargain for Community Schools language in contract

#### ORCHARD TEACHERS ASSN.

-conducted a parent townhall on Community Schools

#### PITTSBURG EDUCATION ASSN.

 passed a Community Schools resolution and distributed fliers to parents

#### SAN JOSE TEACHERS ASSN.

-created and distributed computer stickers for awareness

#### SAN MATEO ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ASSN.

 –coordinated district action with five Community Schools sites

#### **REGION 2**

ANDERSON CASCADE TEACHERS ASSN. —held a leader interest meeting

#### ANDERSON UNION HS TEACHERS ASSN.

-held a leader interest meeting

DELANO UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ASSN. —held a Rep Council presentation

#### FARMERSVILLE TEACHERS ASSN.

 –submitted demand to bargain Community Schools language in contract

 $\rightarrow$ 

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



#### Collective Strength

The following Fresno area locals held a regional strategy session about their actions:

CARUTHERS UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSN.

CENTRAL UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSN.

COALINGA HURON TEACHERS ASSN.

FRESNO TEACHERS ASSN.

GOLDEN PLAINS TEACHERS ASSN.

KINGS CANYON TEACHERS ASSN.

MADERA UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSN.

MERCED COUNTY OFFICE TEACHERS ASSN.

#### STOCKTON TEACHERS ASSN.

 passed resolution to bargain language for Community School and presented to school district

#### YUBA COUNTY CERTIFIED EMPLOYEES ASSN.

-held a leadership strategy session and Rep Council presentation Presenters and speakers at the forum included leadership from Sacramento/ Placer County locals and CTA President David Goldberg (in hat).



#### **Collective Strength**

The following Sacramento/Placer county locals met in a regional forum to build power for Community Schools together:

FOLSOM CORDOVA EDUCATION ASSN.

NATOMAS TEACHERS ASSN.

ROCKLIN TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL ASSN.

SACRAMENTO CITY TEACHERS ASSN.

TWIN RIVERS UNITED EDUCATORS

With unprecedented state funding available for Community Schools ducators and parents are coming together from districts throughout arrament County to share a vision for successful Community chools. Come hear how leaders across the region are working with heil districts to implement community schools.



▼ LBTA in action.



#### LOS BANOS TEACHERS ASSN.

-passed a Rep Council resolution, held a presentation for members, parents, school board members; asked supporters to sign a petition calling on district to pass a resolution and reach agreement with bargaining units

 EMETA's Rep Council passes the resolution; EMETA President Gloria Delfin signs it.



EL MONTE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ASSN.

 passed a Rep Council resolution and held a townhall with more than 40 parents in attendance

Lynwood parents learning about Community Schools, #unionstrong educators, the petition



LYNWOOD TEACHERS ASSN. --conducted a parent event, created a **change.org** petition and submitted demand to bargain





Pasadena educators are all smiles.



#### UNITED TEACHERS OF PASADENA -conducted site visits

#### **REGION 3**

ALHAMBRA TEACHERS ASSN. -conducted site visits

#### ASSOCIATED POMONA TEACHERS —brought parents to speak

at school board meeting

#### COMPTON EDUCATION ASSN.

-passed an e-board resolution

#### GARVEY EDUCATION ASSN.

-passed a Rep Council resolution and conducted member education

#### GLENDALE TEACHERS ASSN.

-made a Rep Council presentation and resolution

#### INGLEWOOD TEACHERS ASSN.

-created Community Schools Coordinator job descriptions

#### MOUNTAIN VIEW TEACHERS ASSN.

-Community School discussion with district administrators

#### SANTA BARBARA TEACHERS ASSN.

 passed an e-board and a Rep Council resolution, conducted member education

#### UNITED TEACHERS

-held open house for Community Schools

#### VICTOR VALLEY TEACHERS ASSN.

-steering committee presentation, communications plan and created Community Schools Coordinator job descriptions COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

#### **REGION 3** (continued)

#### WHITTIER ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ASSN.

 met one-on-one with members; conducted site visits with school board members WETA leadership holds a Community Schools meeting.



#### **REGION 4**

#### ALVORD TEACHERS ASSN.

-conducted campaign to pass school board resolution

CHULA VISTA EDUCATORS -conducted member education

#### FONTANA TEACHERS ASSN.

 passed a member resolution in support of Community Schools

#### GARDEN GROVE EDUCATION ASSN.

-passed a Rep Council resolution and conducted member education

#### ORANGE UNIFIED EDUCATION ASSN.

-passed a Rep Council and a school board resolution

#### SAN DIEGO EDUCATION ASSN.

 held a Community Schools showcase with the district for California Assembly Members ▼ SDEA educators, legislators discuss Community Schools.



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

To learn more about CTA's work with Community Schools and to read previous coverage, visit **cta.org/communityschools**.

## Our Union's Fight to Defend Public School Funding

#### Agreement reached with Gov. Newsom to protect Prop. 98 guaranteed school funds

By Julian Peeples

**OUR UNION FOUGHT** to defend guaranteed funding for public education and won — negotiating an agreement with Gov. Gavin Newsom in the State Budget to ensure that students, educators and families aren't impacted by cuts to the classroom this year while protecting future funding.

CTA mobilized in early May, following the release of the governor's revised proposed budget, which included approaches to close a deficit of approximately \$27.6 billion that would have reduced guaranteed education funding and violated voter-approved Proposition 98. In addition to television commercials and meeting with legislators to secure their support, CTA President David Goldberg held a press briefing in mid-May to explain the situation and underscore that CTA will do whatever it takes to protect guaranteed funding for our public schools.

Over Memorial Day weekend, our union reached an agreement with the governor that will protect education funding and uphold Prop. 98 while also not negatively impacting other areas of the budget, including health care and social services. The state will "suspend" the Prop. 98 requirement, paying schools less money in the short-term with the promise of paying the \$5.5 billion owed in future years.

"The agreement reached with the governor to protect public school funding is a critical step forward for California's schools and communities," Goldberg said. "As we grapple with a massive deficit in our state, we will continue to work



#### Our Students Deserve Fully Funded Schools!

Join the fight to protect education funding and defend our public schools from cuts that will hurt our students and communities. Go to **cta.org/budget** for ongoing updates and ways to share your voice with lawmakers.

"Tell legislators to value public schools and pass a budget that works now *and* in the future," Goldberg said. "Our students and communities are depending on us."

with allies to protect fundamental public services that our communities deserve. In the coming weeks, we will continue our advocacy with legislators along with our public campaign to protect public school funding in the state budget."

Gov. Newsom said the agreement protects students, families and educators, while putting the state on the fiscally sound and sustainable path.

"This agreement is a smart and balanced policy solution that incorporates feedback from California's educators," Newsom said.

The revised proposed public education budget includes: **Per Student Spending for TK-12 Education:** TK-12 per-student funding totals \$17,502 Prop. 98 funding and \$23,878 when accounting for all funding sources.

**Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF):** A decrease of \$252 million for the LCFF for school districts and charter schools reflecting the updated 1.07% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), revised estimates for transitional kindergarten expansion and increased offsetting property tax revenues. This brings total LCFF funding to approximately \$79 billion.

**Community Colleges:** A total of \$11.8 billion in guaranteed funding, including a 1.07% COLA.

The budget must be adopted by June 15 and signed into law by the governor by July 1. At press time, CTA was actively working with lawmakers to protect public education funding; see **cta.org/educator** for the latest news. ■

## No Layoffs: Our Fight Back Against 2,000 Layoffs

#### Organizing in our local unions to defend public schools

By Julian Peeples

EDUCATORS ACROSS CALIFORNIA

fought to defend their schools from attacks by school districts looking to balance their budgets on the backs of students, educators and our communities.

Almost 2,000 CTA members in 106 local associations statewide received layoff notices this spring — a massive increase from years prior, reminiscent of the widespread impacts of underfunding more than a decade ago. With the state facing a huge deficit, some school districts have already started cutting preliminarily, pivoting quickly from trying to fill a teacher shortage to laying off dedicated educators.

Educators impacted by these proposed cuts are organizing to fight back and defend each other and the schools their students deserve. In Anaheim, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Farmersville and Santa Barbara, educators are rising in their local unions together with their communities to reject these cuts, layoffs and a broken public school funding system that cyclically upends California school districts and provides our students with less than they deserve.

"This kind of organizing requires critical conversations at our worksites and in our union meetings — what are we willing to do to stop these layoffs," CTA President David Goldberg said. "Quite simply: There is power in our union — in our connections and commitments to each other." SBTA educators speak out at a school board meeting.



#### SANTA BARBARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Amid a lengthy and contentious bargain, SBTA members are fighting against layoffs and for the resources that Santa Barbara students need. SBTA has been organizing for months, holding rallies, a march and working to show the community the impact of Santa Barbara Unified's decisions. In early May, on National Teachers Day, the school board voted unanimously to lay off four teachers and 11 education support professionals despite a record 81 public comments urging the school board not to do so.

"We are losing educators today," SBTA president Hozby Galindo said. "We're losing positions that positively impact our students and educators.... They play a critical role; I hope that you see that, because the rest of the community sees it."

SBTA members and community held a "wake" before that fateful meeting, "in memory" of colleagues who would not be with them next year due to layoffs. Educators and supporters filled the board room and overflow room, which has become a common occurrence recently. Families and businesses in the Santa Barbara community have shown up to fight alongside educators for their public schools, and signs of support for SBTA and teachers have popped up all over the city.

Follow SBTA's fight for the schools Santa Barbara students and community deserve on Facebook at **@MySBTA**.

▼ Just a few of the thousands of UTLA members rallying against **#CarvalhoCuts**.



#### UNITED TEACHERS LOS ANGELES

Thousands of UTLA members joined SEIU Local 99 members for a massive rally in early May outside Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) headquarters to demand Superintendent Alberto Carvalho and the school board reverse \$6.3 billion in cuts that will have devastating impacts on students.

The **#CarvalhoCuts** will mean less time for students to meet with school psychologists, school counselors and social workers; less help in the classroom, especially for students with special needs; fewer arts, dance, music and elective programs; reduced support for the district's Black Student Achievement Plan, English learner programs and community schools; higher class sizes; and less staff to keep schools safe and clean.

Carvalho's budget cuts mean schools across Los Angeles will lose people who support students, campus safety and educational instruction, including campus aides, class size reduction teachers, library aides, art and music teachers, school nurses and custodians, among others. Special education teacher Tamara Wall says they are losing their full-time school psychologist to having one only two days a week.

"When we have a student who's in crisis, it's our school psychologist who is there to support the student and the administrators and the teacher," says Wall, a UTLA member. "It's definitely going to hurt all around not to have that support every day."

Thousands flooded the streets surrounding the district office in a sea of UTLA red and SEIU purple, banging drums and chanting to let the superintendent and school board know the community is ready to fight for the schools L.A. students deserve.

"We're sending a clear, unified message to the superintendent and the school board that these deep cuts are unfair and unjust," high school teacher and UTLA member William Chavez told EdSource.

Stay current on the ongoing situation in Los Angeles and find out how to support at **utla.net**.

FTA members fight for a new contract and to rescind layoffs.



#### FARMERSVILLE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

FTA members had a very busy spring, fighting back against layoffs and winning a contract after voting to authorize a strike. FTA organized and mobilized for the resources needed to recruit and retain educators, building a community movement for the schools students deserve in Farmersville, in Tulare County.

"We are overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from the community of Farmersville," said FTA President Richard Dybas, after FTA's strike vote. "We appreciate the support of our teachers, parents, community and classified staff."

The fight for a new contract was also a fight to rescind 11 certificated layoffs that were approved by the school board by a narrow 3–2 margin, despite FTA teachers and community rallying at the meeting to save the jobs. As of press time, FTA leaders are planning to take the issue directly to the Farmersville community and show them how the school district is cutting from the class-room instead of the district office — while some of the layoffs have been rescinded, there are still six positions being cut.

"Education is important, and we seem to be the only ones fighting for Farmersville students to get an education they deserve," Dybas told the Visalia Times Delta.



#### SDEA organized and mobilized to beat back threatened layoffs.

#### SAN DIEGO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

SDEA has been busy organizing and mobilizing to support the more than 200 educators who received layoff notices in early spring despite San Diego Unified having millions of dollars in reserves. SDEA members and supporters held a series of rallies calling on the district to rescind the misguided layoffs, packing school board meetings to support educators in peril and their students who will be adversely impacted.

These actions made a difference. In mid-May, the district rescinded 96% of the layoff notices after it struck a deal with SDEA to create "student support" jobs at high-needs schools, according to SDEA President Kyle Weinberg. The agreement helps preserve staffing stability within schools and keeps current pay levels for the student support teachers, he added.

The district said retirements, transfers and resignations also meant fewer layoffs were needed.

"These incredible gains were not possible without our collective actions," Weinberg wrote in a message to union members.

SDEA continues its fight for every impacted member, building a movement in San Diego for the learning conditions all students need and the stability all educators deserve. Stay up to date at **sdea.net** or on Facebook at **@SanDiegoEducationAssociation**. ▼ UESF members on the line.



#### UNITED EDUCATORS OF SAN FRANCISCO

UESF members are fighting back against cuts and layoffs that will hurt their students and communities, as San Francisco Unified officials try to close a financial gap at the expense of their dedicated certificated and classified staff.

In March, 134 certificated UESF members and 102 UESF education support professional members received layoff notices. UESF members mobilized, rallying to support each other and their students — winning a recission of all certificated layoffs in mid-May. ESP layoffs were also rescinded and consolidated into open positions, pending approval from a state-appointed fiscal oversight adviser.

UESF organized to fight against the layoffs, as well as against potential school closures the district floated to address their financial concerns despite the impacts on students and communities. UESF leaders point to a bloated district administration that needs cutting to preserve the people and services who directly support students. Members rallied in late April in support of special education learning and working conditions.

"We pressured the district and made the board of education and community aware of our concerns about starting the next school year fully staffed," says UESF President Cassondra Curiel.

Curiel said there were numerous classroom teacher vacancies when school started last year, explaining that UESF expects similar vacancies to start next school year — in excess of the number of layoff notices issued.

"We worked with management to create an extended voluntary reassignment process for all of the projected openings and have placed all certificated members at school sites for next school year," she says. "This effort gets us closer to fully staffed schools on the first day of school, which has been a major priority for UESF members." ASTA members set up empty chairs to show the impact of losing educators.



#### ANAHEIM SECONDARY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

ASTA members scored a huge victory in early May when the school board rescinded its decision to lay off 119 dedicated educators. ASTA members had held a series of rallies over the past months in collaboration with their community to issue a collective message to the school district that layoffs were not acceptable.

"We share in the joy and relief that many of our members feel knowing that our colleagues will be returning for the 2024-25 school year," said ASTA President Geoff Morganstern. "It's also incredibly important to recognize all the students, parents and community members who joined the conversation. Many stood with us on the rally line while others helped to keep both sides talking during these difficult times."

ASTA's series of morning rallies at schools throughout Anaheim Union High School District built a movement to reverse the school board-approved layoffs of a whopping 10% of their teachers. School district administrators issued Reduction in Force (RIF) notices to more than 250 educators, threatening their livelihoods just as they reached the homestretch of the school year.

ASTA members mobilized to defend Anaheim public

schools, showing the impact of the layoffs, including larger class sizes, losing dedicated teachers that students know and trust, and a loud message to educators who might come to Anaheim that they should look elsewhere. In a special board meeting, the district rescinded the layoffs and said it will look at other budget items to make cuts (in addition to savings from attrition). Morganstern said there will be challenges and difficult decisions ahead, adding that ASTA is ready to work collaboratively and transparently with the district and community to determine the best path forward.

"We will reflect on lessons learned and continue to advocate for the well-being of our students and members," he said.

Community members are clearly supportive, in no small part due to their ongoing involvement with Anaheim community schools. "The groundswell of support and activism from our students, families and community organizations on behalf of our teachers and ASTA's organizing efforts against the layoffs is testament to our years of work with our education partners to build community schools," said ASTA Executive Director Lisa Eck.

#### What if I receive a layoff notice?

**CTA has resources** to support educators who receive layoff notices, including important instructions for members who are laid off and a layoff survival guide. Go to **bit.ly/CTAlayoffs\_resources** to learn more.



Spencer Fowler, second from right, marches to district headquarters with Roosevelt Middle School educators, students, parents and community members.

## "We're Going to Fight for You"

How a school community and the union saved their teachers' jobs

**ON A LATE** Friday afternoon in early March Luis Salas, a first-year math teacher at Roosevelt IB Middle School in San Diego, was called into the principal's office and told that he'd received a layoff notice. Salas, a member of San Diego Education Association (SDEA), went home afterward to let his wife know and ponder his future.

By the time he came back to campus on Monday, the news was out. Roosevelt eighth grade English teacher and SDEA member Leah LaVelle asked him and Spencer Fowler, the other Roosevelt educator who had been pink-slipped, if it was okay if she and a few of her students took actions to try to save their jobs.

"Students were mad," recalled Salas. "Their attitude

was 'you belong to our community and we're going to fight for you."

"Spencer and Luis are beloved by students," said LaVelle, who teaches a year-round community project connected to Roosevelt being an International Baccalaureate school; project students identify local, national or world issues and investigate solutions. "Three of my students in the project are leaders on campus, so we met to brainstorm what we could do."

LaVelle coordinated with Roosevelt site rep Katie O'Malley. She contacted students' parents, who were all supportive. "We decided we'd do a **change.org** petition. We got permission to take photos of other students expressing how

Roosevelt educators Leah LaVelle, left, and Katie O'Malley.



"Kids on a bus got off to join us, parents pulled up in their cars, elementary school kids joined us. By the time we reached the rally, we made up half of the crowd." –Leah LaVelle, San Diego Education Association

they felt about Spencer and Luis being laid off and posted to social media. I talked to a few teachers on March 11 to organize a one-mile march from school to the next district board meeting on March 26. We made flyers for the march and papered the neighborhoods."

The march coincided with an SDEA rally outside the board meeting to demand that educator layoffs be rescinded district-wide.\* On March 26, Roosevelt students, educators, parents and community members held signs, led chants and marched down a busy street.

"Kids on a bus got off to join us, parents pulled up in their cars, elementary school kids joined us," LaVelle said. "By the time we reached the rally, we made up half of the crowd."

Fowler, a seventh grade English teacher and SDEA member, spoke to news media at the rally about the impact of receiving a layoff notice. "I was devastated. This is my community. I work at my community school, I live in [nearby] North Park. To get that [pink slip] was devastating."

In addition, one of LaVelle's students was interviewed by several news outlets.

#### NOT A "BUDGET SOLUTION" WE ARE MORE THAN A NUMBER!



"Students have completely reshaped their disposition towards mathematics and finding out I may not be there next year has profoundly impacted them"

Luis S. is an educator at Roosevelt International



Luis Salas was one of multiple educators featured in SDEA's campaign to keep educators' jobs.



 Spencer Fowler speaks to the media at the March 26 rally.

Earlier that week, Roosevelt educators and the principal held a community and parent mixer and invited board member Richard Barrera, with whom students had built a relationship.

"Katie O'Malley talked to Barrera and brought him over to Spencer," said LaVelle. "We asked him why our teachers are being laid off. Our students care about them, these young men are role models."

To the Roosevelt community's relief, pink slips for both Fowler and Salas were later rescinded. LaVelle likes to think it was because of their collective actions. "I want that to be a win for the students," she said.

Salas is grateful to fellow educators, students, the community — and his union. "Our union fights for our rights."  $\blacksquare$ 

\*A total of 226 SDEA members were issued pink slips. The March 26 rally and other actions by SDEA and allies pushed the district to rescind almost all layoffs by mid-May. SDEA leadership continues to fight to keep all educators' jobs.

Rebecca Bernard

From left, Owen Jackman, ABC member-District E: Political Involvement Committee Chair Roger McCoy; Natomas TA President Mara Harvey; Woodland EA President

### **Action Heroes CTA's Member- and Chapter-in-Politics Awards** honor outstanding contributions

AT CTA STATE COUNCIL in April, a member and several locals were recognized with the 2023 Member-in-Politics Award in Honor of Ted Bass and the Chapter-in-Politics Award in Honor of Joyce Fadem.

The latter award, named for the late CTA director of Governmental Relations Joyce Fadem, honors locals that make outstanding contributions to their communities throughout the state through effective organizing in political campaigns. Natomas Teachers Association received the award for Rookie Chapter, Woodland Education Association received the award for Small Chapter and Orange Unified Education Association received the award for Medium Chapter. ("Rookie" means the chapter has not been politically active prior to the election for which the nomination is submitted.)

The Member-in-Politics Award is named for the late CTA political consultant Ted Bass and recognizes an outstanding teacher in politics for their effective organizing in political campaigns. Amie Stewart of Teachers Association of Paramount (TAP) received the 2023 award.

Stewart serves as TAP vice chair and Political Action Committee chair and oversees TAP's role in endorsing candidates for school board elections. Stewart was also elected to the Bellflower Unified School Board in November 2022, is a member of the Long Beach Democratic Club and a delegate for the LA County Federation of Labor.

Woodland Education Association, north of Sacramento with more than 500 members, was part of a diverse coalition that included parents, students, labor unions, democratic groups and Pride organizations that became involved in a recall election campaign. In June 2023 the local school board voted to adopt a Pride Month resolution supporting all students. One trustee made homophobic and transphobic





remarks during the meeting and on social media and days later, Woodland EA's executive board voted unanimously to spearhead her recall. By November, enough verified signatures had been collected for the recall to qualify for the 2024 March Primary Election ballot. The trustee lost her seat. While Woodland EA is in the early stages of etching their political involvement path, they are clearly growing their collective strength in local politics.

Natomas Teachers Association (NTA), based in Sacramento with 600 members, seized the opportunity to become involved in a special election in 2023 when a school board member resigned. Five candidates entered the race and NTA endorsed CTA-Retired member Brenda Borge. NTA worked hard to make sure the community knew the importance of this election, increase voter turnout and form partnerships and coalitions. Working with CTA Governmental Relations staff, NTA rolled out a postcard campaign, ran digital ads and distributed mailers and door hangers. Partners including Elk Grove TA, Sacramento City TA and Twin Rivers United Educators helped canvas the community from



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CTA VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT PLANS FOR EDUCATORS, LLC September through November. NTA narrowed down the approximately 9,000 voters to "likely voters" and knocked on 4,000 doors.

Other candidates in the race raised over \$30,000 in campaign contributions from special interests and local charter schools. In the end, the NTA-endorsed candidate was not victorious, but the experience ushered in a new era where building organizational structures and coalitions will lead to success for NTA in future elections.

**Orange Unified Education Association** (OUEA), with nearly 1,300 members, is in Orange County — well

known for its political volatility. The new school board of Orange Unified School District recently fired the superintendent and triggered a special election that cost half a million dollars. It also passed a "Parent Bill of Rights" that

 Orange Unified EA member and State Council Representative Nate Dawson, OUEA Vice President Karin Barone and OUEA President Greg Goodlander.



temporarily banned a digital library and passed a forced outing policy targeting transgender students.

But the community rose in opposition, forming a parent-led coalition to recall two school board members. OUEA received donations from other local CTA chapters to stop the extremist takeover of schools, including Westminster, Anaheim, Saddleback, Tustin, La Habra, Buena Park and Capistrano. Members were subjected to threats of violence and harassment; they and coalition volunteers helped gather signatures, canvass, write postcards and make phone calls. The recall, on the 2024 March Primary

Election ballot, was successful. As a result, OUEA members are organized and more connected with their community than ever before. The chapter recently joined the Orange County Labor Federation. ■

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