


california

educator

SUMMER 2025 VOLUME 29 ISSUE 6

**SPECIAL
ISSUE**



**FIGHT FOR
SCHOOLS!**

CTA

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Celebrating our Union's
Power and Victories
in 2024-25 **PAGE 11**

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VOLUME 29 ISSUE 6



SPECIAL ISSUE
**#UNION
STRONG**

2025

#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH

July is a time to recognize and celebrate contributions and identities of people with disabilities. **PAGE 25**



YEAR IN REVIEW

Revisit many of our union wins this past year — with many more to come!

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Honors for CTA members and chapters. **PAGES 32, 33**
cta.org/awards

DIGITAL

WE CAN'T WAIT!

Our campaign for fully staffed, fully funded schools and improved educator pay launched in February and is going strong across California. **PAGE 20**
wecantwait.info

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

GROWING A MOVEMENT

Our National Community Schools Learning Lab in Anaheim convened multiple teams to learn best practices and set their own paths. **PAGE 23**
cta.org/communityschools

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SUMMER PD & UNIONISM

Take advantage of opportunities to perfect your craft, network and build union power. Bonus: Continuing education credits available at CTA Summer Institute and Presidents Conference.

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cta.org/conferences

FOR BIPOC EDUCATORS

Seeking National Board Certification? Apply to "Navigating National Board BIPOC Cohorts," hosted by CTA, that includes individualized coaching and support from UCLA/Stanford University. Deadline to apply: July 26.
cta.org/nbct

MEMBER BENEFITS

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CTA's Access to Savings offers deals on weekend getaways as well as full-on vacations before the new school year starts — and all year long.
CTAMemberBenefits.org/access

FOR NEW CTA MEMBERS

CTA's Member Resource Center helps you navigate your benefits.
CTAMemberBenefits.org

Photo: On May 17, CTA rallies statewide drew 15,000 people to demand that federal funding for public schools be protected. Above, educators and allies march in San Francisco. Story on Page 6.

Year in Review



FIGHT FOR SCHOOLS On May 17, our voices echoed across the state at rallies that drew 15,000. **PAGE 6**

A LOOK BACK Local wins and effective actions brought us together in solidarity with students, communities. **PAGE 11**

We Can't Wait!

Educators continue to push for student supports, full staffing and funding at schools.

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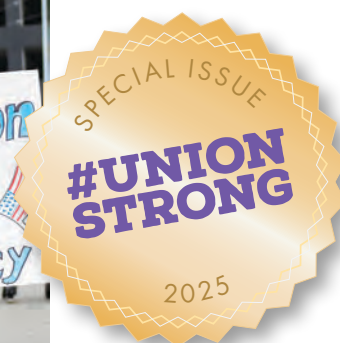


Disability Pride Month

CTA celebrates, advocates for people with disabilities in July and year-round.

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Cover photo by Amanda Hart, United Educators of San Francisco. Photos this page from top, l. to r.: Sign from the May 17 **#FightForSchools** rally in San Francisco; Las Lomitas Education Assn. strike in Fall 2024; San Diego Education Assn. **#WeCantWait** picketers; Disability Pride flag.



Welcome to Our Special #UnionStrong Issue!

WHAT A YEAR it's been — full of local chapters' amazing actions and our union's tremendous advocacy efforts at the state and federal level. Summer is the perfect time to celebrate and reflect on our successes and victories over the past school year — and there are plenty of them, as you'll see in the following pages.

While there is much work yet to do, we're taking a moment to honor our union's awe-inspiring achievements — we have made incredible gains in 2024–25! Together, we can win fully funded, fully staffed, safe and supportive schools for every student, educator and community in California.



Reminder: “Home Is Here” Resources

OUR UNION PROVIDES Know Your Rights Red Cards in multiple languages, Safe Space posters with various designs, Safe Space buttons and Know Your Rights trainings for members at no cost.



All have been in high demand — no surprise, given the intensifying ICE raids and other attacks on vulnerable populations in our state. Just in the past few months, more than 322,150 red cards and almost 109,000 posters/buttons have been delivered to members. CTA's Human Rights Cadre program has held more than a dozen Know Your Rights trainings at local chapters and service centers since the beginning of this year.

Order red cards and posters and find more information about our support for immigrant educators, students and families at cta.org/homeishere. Request a Know Your Rights training, which focuses on student and educator legal rights and protections, details on resources to share and more, at cta.org/human-rights-cadre-training-program.

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STAFF WRITER Julian Peebles
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Amy Peruzzaro
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CTA WEB EDITOR Chris Robledo
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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.

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CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

1705 Murchison Dr., Burlingame, CA 94010-4583
650-697-1400; fax 650-552-5002; editor@cta.org, cta.org

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Get Info



05/2025



Embracing Our Union Power

THE ACADEMIC YEAR is behind us, and I hope many of you are taking a well-deserved rest. Our work as educators is all-consuming, especially as we continue to operate in an environment that lacks the resources and funding that our students and communities need and deserve. And while one of our greatest joys is seeing our students move forward — learning, growing, exploring — they are also moving into a future that feels very uncertain.

To put it plainly, our students — and educators, workers and communities — are under attack. Immigrant students and families, trans youth, poor and hungry kids are under attack. Funding for special education services, educational assistance for rural communities and other vital components of public education face debilitating cuts from the federal government.

As educators and union members, we know our duty is to fight back against these harmful attacks and cuts to our classrooms. We can cut through the noise of dishonest and politically calculated culture wars and extremist narratives that attempt to divide and distract us.

We see evidence of our power all around us — and you'll see many examples in this #UnionStrong issue. Up and down the state, educators are working together and with our broader communities to fight for fully funded and staffed schools. Local chapters in the We Can't Wait campaign and beyond are fighting for better working conditions and pay for educators and fighting back against school closures, and layoffs that contribute to California having some of the highest class sizes in the nation.

As part of our Fight for Schools campaign, this spring CTA members went to the offices of Republican members of Congress in our state and demanded that they vote to protect school meals, special education, and services for families living in poverty and against tax cuts for billionaires. Every single Republican promised they would protect funding for communities, and when they returned to Washington D.C., broke their promise. Then, on May 17, 15,000 educators rallied in San Francisco, Sacramento, Hanford, Los Angeles and San Diego to fight back. We will



continue to organize against any attempt to erode public education and vital public services that our students and communities rely on.

Our struggles today are not new. In fact, our struggles to give students the quality education they deserve and to ensure that all of us live and work in a democratic, equitable society repeat themselves, over years, sometimes over generations. But we meet and overcome our struggles by rebuilding and renewing our movement again and again.

One of the most beautiful and powerful aspects of being union is that it gives us a means of engaging in struggle together. It's hard to imagine how we'd survive and navigate the challenges we face as working people if we were to do so without our union — without each other.

Through deep organizing we will continue to defend the rights of educators and students and fight to ensure that all schools are safe places to learn and teach. We will also continue our fight for school funding so that every educator in California can earn a living wage and live in the community they serve.

In the days ahead, let's care for each other, and after we've rested, let's get ready to continue our fight. We will do this together.

David B. Goldberg

CTA PRESIDENT

▼ Labor activist Dolores Huerta, center, stands with the crowd in Hanford to defend and protect students, public schools and communities.



A SHOW OF FORCE

At five simultaneous rallies held around the state, more than 15,000 Fight for Schools

By Julian Peebles

MAY 17 was a historic day for our union, as more than 15,000 educators, parents, students and community allies turned out at five simultaneous rallies and marches across the Golden State to demand protection for public schools, students and communities under threat by the Trump Administration and Republican-controlled Congress.

In Hanford, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and Sacramento, CTA educators and supporters united their voices to defend about \$16 billion in federal funding — money for school-based health services, special education services for students with disabilities and meals for hungry students. The rallies

received widespread coverage in local and national media, including being highlighted on Rachel Maddow's roundup of protests occurring nationwide.

CTA President David Goldberg addressed thousands of people gathered in San Diego before a march through Balboa Park.

"We call on the Trump Administration to stop threatening cuts to our schools and communities. We call on members of Congress to stand up against these threats and do their jobs — stand with our students and our communities," Goldberg said. "Our students rely on school meals, special education services and other supports funded by federal dollars."

▼ CTA President David Goldberg speaks at the San Diego rally.

**"WE CALL ON MEMBERS OF CONGRESS
TO STAND UP AGAINST THESE THREATS
AND DO THEIR JOBS – STAND WITH OUR STUDENTS
AND OUR COMMUNITIES."**

—CTA President **David Goldberg**



▲ San Diego educators, families and community allies march in support of their schools.

In Los Angeles, thousands of educators rallied outside of Elon Musk's SpaceX, spotlighting Musk's dysfunctional and chaotic campaign to attack public services, which has put billions of Californians' tax dollars on the line. Local high school student and Students Deserve activist Mariyah Williams shared with the crowd:

"When billionaires like Trump and Elon Musk threaten to strip \$1.2 billion from our schools, that's not just a number. That's our school lunches. That's special education. That's Title I funding that supports students in communities like mine," said Williams. "These are survival funds for LAUSD's most vulnerable

kids. We're not going to let them take that away."

In Hanford, in the heart of the Central Valley, educators and allies marched to the office of Rep. David Valadao, one of nine California Republican members of Congress who voted for a budget with massive funding cuts in May. Legendary labor leader and activist Dolores Huerta joined the rally to underscore the importance of this fight for Central Valley communities.

"Central Valley students have been left behind in the fight for equitable education," Huerta said. "We are constantly fighting for resources and support for our youth, including calling for transparency in service denials for students with



▼ The massive LA rally was held outside of SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne.



**"THESE CUTS DON'T TRIM FAT,
THEY CUT INTO THE SOUL OF PUBLIC
EDUCATION. I'M HERE TO SAY: OUR CHILDREN'S
FUTURES AREN'T NEGOTIABLE.
WE NEED MORE FUNDING, NOT LESS."**

—Dinuba Teachers Assn. Member
Nadira Arreola

Getting vocal in LA.



disabilities. Cuts to federal funding will harm our schools and communities, making it even more challenging to achieve successful academic outcomes.

"I'm proud to stand with educators in fighting for strong public schools, protecting our most vulnerable children and families, and defending public education as the cornerstone of our democracy. Our kids and communities are counting on us."

In Sacramento, thousands of educators were joined by parents and students, including Volma Volcy, a parent of a

fourth-grade student in the Sacramento area.

"I've seen firsthand how invaluable teachers are. I've watched as teachers have nurtured and cared for students, often paying out of their own pockets for resources for our kids," Volcy said. "Schools are already underfunded. We need more resources, not less!"

Many educators organized carpools and traveled from long distances to join the actions. Celia Medina-Owens traveled to the rally and march in San Francisco from Pittsburg across the Bay, saying she attended to raise her voice for her students.

▼ Rallygoers in Sacramento make their feelings known.



▲ Twin Rivers United Educators represent in Sacramento.



▲ Among the signs in Sacramento.

HOW MUCH WILL YOUR DISTRICT LOSE?

Use CTA's calculators to view the federal funding at risk in local school and community college districts, with details for impacts to special education and school meal programs. K-12 data is at cta.org/trumpcuts and community college data is at cta.org/trumpcutscca.



▼ Like the other rallies, San Francisco's gathering drew educators and allies from miles away.



—Pittsburg Education Assn. President **Celia Medina-Owens**



▲ An educator advocates for her students in San Francisco.



▲ United Educators of San Francisco speakers at the rally.

“Federal cuts will hurt our district’s ability to do things like provide meals to our students, which so many of our students depend on,” said Medina-Owens, who is president of Pittsburg Education Assn. “So many of our students and families are vulnerable at this moment — and we need to fight for the resources they need to survive.”

Dinuba Teachers Association member Nadira Arreola said when public education goes underfunded, the ones who suffer

the most are always the ones who need the most.

“These cuts don’t trim fat, they cut into the soul of public education. I’m here to say: our children’s futures aren’t negotiable. We need more funding, not less,” said Arreola. “We need trained staff, smaller class sizes, access to specialists and inclusive programs that lift all students.”

Learn more about each action at cta.org/ffs. ■

▼ On Nov. 3, Natomas Teachers Assn. members knocked on over 1,000 doors in support of NTA-endorsed candidates.



United, We Are Strong!

Locals organize and win across the state

By Julian Peebles

THE COLLECTIVE POWER of organized educators is unstoppable!

The 2024–25 school year was filled with victories fueled by our commitment to each other in our local unions, dedication to our students, communities and our fight for public education. We also worked together to defend vulnerable communities from continued extremist attacks following Trump's inauguration in January.

“We are the kind of union that can win at the bargaining table, fight layoffs, extend Proposition 55, secure state funding and protect our most vulnerable students from federal attacks. A

union that dares to struggle — and dares to win,” CTA Vice President Leslie Littman says.

From inspiring strikes by union educators to our continued fight to protect all students from attacks at both local and federal levels to our historic 2024 election campaign, CTA continues to lead the way in the fight back against extremism and the fight forward for the public schools and community colleges all students deserve.

Check out these amazing victories by union educators over the past school year.



REGION I

Las Lomitas Education Assn. (LLEA):

After three powerful and inspiring days on the picket line, LLEA won a pay increase and health benefit increases to better recruit and retain educators while building a historic movement for public schools in the wealthiest ZIP Code in the United States.

"This victory will bring much-deserved stability to our school communities. We made the powerful decision to go on strike and we won the contract we need to stay in the community we love serving," said LLEA Co-President Jennifer Montalvo. "The support from our classified colleagues, parents, students, families and community members kept us moving forward to victory. Together, we remained united and steadfast in winning for our students today and future generations."



Fremont Unified District Teachers Assn. (FUDTA):

Students and families joined FUDTA members in an inspiring art build and massive picket in April in their fight for the schools all Fremont students need to thrive and succeed.

"I am proud of our members. We stood strong, rallying together for each other and for our community," said FUDTA President Victoria Chon.



Franklin-McKinley Education Assn. (FMEA) members

mobilized earlier this year to defend their students and families when district administrators proposed closing as many as six schools. FMEA organized opposition to the proposal, bringing to light the many potential consequences of school closures and working to prepare the community and district administrators to address them.



REGION II

HERE'S WHY I SIGNED

1. A FAMILIAR FACE

Sierra Outdoor School serves 83 different school districts, welcoming students from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. For many, it's their first time away from home, and they often seek familiarity in an unfamiliar environment. As a woman of color in outdoor education, I am proud to be that comforting, familiar face for students, helping them feel welcomed and open to the outdoor experiences SOS provides.



Kathy Valle
Naturalist
Sierra Outdoor School

2. REPRESENTATION & SUPPORT

I am honored to work alongside a diverse team that supports students from various backgrounds. We make it a priority to ensure that our students know that the outdoors is for everyone to enjoy. By joining ACE, I am advocating for the support needed to provide the best outdoor experience for all students and to ensure every student feels valued.



Association of Clovis Educators (ACE):

In November 2024, Clovis Unified School District's naturalists successfully petitioned to join ACE. These incredible educators are negotiating their first-ever union contract — working toward fair compensation, safer working conditions and the resources needed to provide exceptional outdoor education to more than 11,000 students every year.

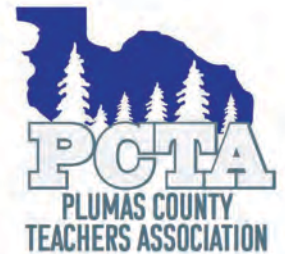
"By joining ACE, I am advocating for the support needed to provide the best outdoor experience for all students and to ensure every student feels valued," Clovis naturalist and ACE member Kathy Valle said.



Madera Unified Teachers Assn. (MUTA) members have been organizing over the course of the past year through a pivotal bargain campaign, culminating in a May event that drew hundreds of educators and parents to a school board meeting to demand the district prioritize educators.

Plumas County Teachers Assn. (PCTA)

fought against layoffs, organized against the school district's mismanagement of funds and met with community members to help form a "mobilization group" of pro-teacher, pro-public education supporters who are willing to show up to fight for students.



Rocklin Professional Teachers Assn. (RPTA)

worked to flip some pivotal school board seats, organizing members from all over the district to walk each week, knock on doors and talk to voters in the months leading up to the November election.



Sacramento City Teachers Assn. dedicated hours to precinct walking, hosting events and letter-writing parties, which resulted in a historic win of four board seats in the November election. Every school board member now on the board was endorsed by SCTA.



Western Placer Teachers Assn. (WPTA) organized and built power for a contract campaign and settled a contract in mediation this past May. The strength of the union was evident in the board action turnout and rallies!



Natomas Teachers Assn. knocked on thousands of doors and talked with voters about their endorsed school board candidates. Their power was evident in the number of educators who stepped up to fight for a better future for their students.



REGION III

▼ Carolyn Grumm, second grade teacher and Arcadia Teachers Assn. member, is a volunteer with Sierra Madre Search and Rescue team, which played a critical role during and after the 2025 LA wildfires. She is pictured standing behind the van's open door along with the team.



Union educators showed that an injury to one is an injury to all in January, coming together to support each other and the greater **Los Angeles** community after devastating wildfires that destroyed more than 18,000 structures and chased 200,000 from their homes. Working with actors Will Ferrell and Ana Gasteyer, our union raised more than \$40,000 to help educators who were impacted move forward.

In all, 19 school districts closed and a dozen schools were destroyed in the Palisades and Eaton fires. Our union mobilized immediately, with local associations in the impacted areas supporting members on the ground and CTA coordinating relief efforts through our Disaster Relief Fund to help support those in need.

"I've been so moved by how we've carried on together, wrapped our arms around each other for support, reached out to check on our colleagues, students and neighbors, and helped raise money and provide mutual aid," CTA President David Goldberg said in January.



United Teachers of Pasadena (UTP) organized and saved 40 jobs that were at risk of layoffs. Even after the wildfires that impacted educators and their families, members showed up to school board meetings and fought to rescind layoffs and keep educators in Pasadena.

In Pasadena, an estimated 10% of school district staff lost their homes, as well as one in six students, which made the district's proposal to lay off 65 UTP members that much more difficult to swallow. UTP organized, showed up to school board meetings, fought to keep educators in Pasadena and saved 40 jobs.



More than 130 **United Teachers Los Angeles** members who work at El Camino Real (ECR) Charter High School went on strike for five days in February, walking picket lines in the rain to win the smaller class sizes their students deserve.

"It's exciting and scary but totally worth it because we have the best kids ever and they deserve the best teachers," said ECR English teacher Laura Casares.



Santa Barbara Teachers Assn. members mobilized to get the school board to rescind 79 layoffs it approved earlier this spring, saving nearly every single job before the end of the school year, according to SBTA President Hozby Galindo.



REGION IV

Members of **Grossmont Education Assn.** in East San Diego have been mobilizing against harmful layoffs, and an anti-student, anti-union school board majority. Hundreds of educators, parents, students, labor partners and community allies showed up at school board meetings to demand that the board rescind the layoffs of teacher librarians, classroom teachers, special education teachers, VAPA teachers and more. The board's rejection of the demands of the school community has activated a coalition of allies to continue the fight to rescind layoffs and a campaign that is building power to flip the school board in 2026.



WE WILL STAY LOUD
AND WE WILL STAY
CONNECTED
WE WILL NOT ONLY DEFEND
OUR STUDENTS,
WE WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT
FOR THEIR FUTURES
A BETTER GUHSD IS POSSIBLE.



With the support of the President's Release Grant and CTA-ABC grants, **Association of Placentia-Linda Educators (APLE)** took on the fight of their union life! After four years of enduring an extremist board majority, APLE spent months planning and organizing, and was able to flip their school board. APLE and allies are now rebuilding the culture and outstanding reputation of Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District. At left, APLE members canvass for their candidates.



San Diego Education Assn. (SDEA) members turned up the volume this spring with pickets across 125 schools in the San Diego Unified School District, combining organizing power with new art skills! SDEA is one of the 30+ local unions participating in the “We Can’t Wait” campaign, uniting educators statewide to demand fully staffed schools, competitive wages and benefits, and safe, stable schools. To help fuel the momentum, Bay Area artist David Solnit teamed up with several locals to create eye-catching visuals. In March, he spent a full day with SDEA’s organizing committee and community allies, teaching screen-printing and large-scale banner making. These sessions led to broader community art builds where members connected, built solidarity and prepared bold visuals for pickets in the spring. The results: A tentative agreement with San Diego Unified that included a 1.5% retroactive raise, and increased statewide pressure to finally fund the schools our students and communities deserve.



Cajon Valley Education Assn. set a high bar for membership recruitment to build union power to fight back against an extremist school board that has created chaos in Cajon Valley. CVEA leadership recruited 314 new members, increasing their membership by 45% over the last two and a half years! CVEA used all four available CTA grants this year (site visit, local planning, member engagement and community engagement). The site visit grant was focused on a listening tour for bargaining, while the local planning grant helped the executive board to create their membership recruitment goal. CVEA demonstrated its power at board meetings and beyond.

▼ Members and allies of Oakland Education Assn., United Teachers of Richmond, United Educators of San Francisco and Berkeley Federation of Teachers at Oakland's Frank Ogawa Plaza at the We Can't Wait launch in February.



WE CAN'T WAIT!

Educators push for student supports, full staffing at schools

▼ San Diego Education Assn. members



ON FEB. 4, more than 80,000 educators across California launched “We Can’t Wait,” a campaign involving CTA locals’ shared demands and coordinated contract negotiations with 32 school districts. Educators from Anaheim, Los Angeles, Oakland, Richmond, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco and two dozen other school districts — who teach and serve 1 million students — participated.

Campaign demands include:

- Fully staffed schools, with smaller class sizes and caseloads;
- Safe and stable schools, with no layoffs, budget cuts or school closures;
- Competitive wages and benefits for educators;
- Districts should prioritize existing funds to support students and educators instead of overspending for administration, consultants, outside contractors and exorbitant reserves.

The goal: to give students, educators and communities what they need and deserve to thrive — long-term.

The status quo — where billionaires benefit from California’s robust economy while students and working people suffer — is unacceptable, said CTA President David Goldberg at the “We Can’t Wait” launch. “We demand that districts prioritize resources for our students and ensure California leads the country in providing a quality public education for every student.”

▼ We Can't Wait local unions, listed below:



"We demand that districts prioritize resources for our students and ensure California leads the country in providing a quality public education for every student."

—CTA President
David Goldberg

In April and during the week of May 1, which coincided with May Day (International Workers Day), educators across California reminded the public why We Can't Wait. At school site pickets and rallies they demonstrated their commitment to fight for their students, schools and communities, as well as themselves.

Many of the participating locals have contracts that expired at the end of June 2025. While they are negotiating separately, local chapters in the campaign are bargaining during the same time period. This allows locals to learn from each other and share best practices; bring heightened public awareness and support for educators, students and schools; and put pressure on districts and the state.

The We Can't Wait campaign is growing and strengthening. Learn more and get involved at wecantwait.info.



WHY WE CAN'T WAIT

- California is the fourth-largest economy *in the world* — yet it is in the bottom half of states for per pupil funding.
- Education funding at the state and federal levels is unstable and unreliable, leading to cycles of budget cuts, educator layoffs, school closures and an ongoing lack of resources and staffing.
- Educator wages are far below those of other college-educated workers, making it challenging for educators to live in the communities we serve.

This has all resulted in a growing educator recruitment and retention crisis — and schools that are not adequately serving students. Learn more at wecantwait.info.

Scenes from across the state on/around International Workers' Day:

▼ Natomas Teachers Assn.



▼ Twin Rivers United Educators



▼ United Teachers of Richmond



▼ United Educators of San Francisco



▼ Teams of CTA local leaders, district administrators, parents and community partners discuss foundational components of community schools, such as shared decision-making and ensuring all stakeholders have an equal voice.



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS LEARNING LAB

**Teams come together in Anaheim
to learn best practices and chart their own path**

IN SEPTEMBER 2024, the community schools movement took a huge step forward with the launch of the National Community Schools Learning Lab, coordinated by Anaheim Secondary Teachers Assn. (ASTA) and the Anaheim Union High School District.

Four CTA locals participated in the inaugural two-day program, along with their district administrators, parents and community partners. Since then, many more teams — including from the Pacific Northwest and East Coast — have benefited

from the Learning Lab, which shows community schools in action; discusses shared governance and ensuring all stakeholders have an equal voice; and unpacks individual teams' unique needs, assets and path forward.

In April, NEA President Becky Pringle participated in a Learning Lab program, at one point speaking to all attendees. "Whatever you might think of the curtailment of other civil rights, you must fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn," she said, quoting activist W.E.B. DuBois. ➔

Our union is committed to community schools' democratic model of shared decision making, which helps build power within communities and leads to a more equitable society. Community schools have been shown to improve student outcomes, including in attendance, academic achievement, high school graduation rates and reduced racial and economic achievement gaps.

The Learning Lab is funded by NEA's Great Public Schools initiative. The state has also made a historic investment of \$4.1 billion to help create new community schools and transition traditional schools in California. Read more about our work with community schools at cta.org/communityschools. ■

▼ NEA President Becky Pringle steps off the bus with CTA Board Member Grant Schuster on her visit to Anaheim community schools.



Learning Lab 2025–26 Dates

The National Community Schools Learning Lab's

2025–26 two-day programs are scheduled as follows:

- Sept. 23–24
- Oct. 21–22
- Feb. 24–25
- March 17–18
- Apr. 21–22

For more information email Sean Fleshman, Learning Lab Lead, at ncslearninglab@gmail.com.



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JULY:

Disability Pride Month

CTA supports the month of recognition, celebration

FOR MANY YEARS, Dr. Laurie Crawford has advocated for people with disabilities. The special education teacher and member of Stockton Teachers Assn. is acutely aware of how society, including public education, tends to discriminate against and isolate those with disabilities instead of integrating them fully into mainstream life and work.

“As educators we really focus on disability from a special education perspective — which is critically important — but not a lot beyond that,” she says.

Crawford, a CTA State Council delegate, saw an opportunity to expand members’ awareness of disability and actions to ensure social justice related to disability. She spearheaded CTA’s official recognition and support for Disability Pride Month in

July, starting in July 2025. The month is a time to break down barriers by learning about the history, contributions, achievements, experiences and struggles of people with disabilities. The month coincides with the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law on July 26, 1990.

As part of its commitment, CTA will provide educational opportunities for members to develop a deeper understanding of disability as a social justice and civil rights issue.

“It’s important to educate about ableism (discrimination in favor of able-bodied people), which impacts our education systems for students, families and educators, and should monitor relevant legislation,” says Crawford.

This includes working to expand awareness of



Disability Pride Month

THIS ANNUAL CELEBRATION takes place in July. It is rooted in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, which recognizes and celebrates the contributions and identities of people with disabilities. It's a time to challenge stereotypes, promote inclusion and work toward greater equality for individuals with disabilities. The 2025 theme, chosen by The Arc's National Council of Self-Advocates, is "We Belong Here, and We're Here to Stay," emphasizing the vital role of people with disabilities in our communities.

The Disability Pride Flag is composed of a number of colors that are of great significance:

- **Charcoal gray background:** In memory of the victims of ableist abuse and violence, including children or those killed, suicides or individuals who suffered from negligence
- **Diagonal band:** Cutting across the barriers blocking people with disabilities from full participation, integration and inclusion in society
- **Red stripe:** Physical disabilities (chronic pain/fatigue, mobility impairment, loss of limbs)
- **Gold stripe:** Neurodivergence (autism, ADHD, dyslexia)
- **White stripe:** Undiagnosed and invisible disabilities
- **Blue stripe:** Psychiatric disabilities (depression, PTSD, anxiety, etc.)
- **Green stripe:** Sensory disabilities (hearing loss, visual impairments, etc.)

Disability Rights Movement: "Nothing About Us Without Us"

THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT is a civil rights movement that advocates for the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. It aims to ensure equal opportunities, accessibility and freedom from discrimination for individuals with disabilities.

The movement has led to major legislative changes, like the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination based on disability in various areas of public life, and the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

For more information about the movement, visit carsplus.org.

▼ Dr. Laurie Crawford



"As educators we focus on disability from a special education perspective – which is critically important – but not a lot beyond that."

—Dr. Laurie Crawford,
Stockton Teachers Assn.

barriers that may prohibit full participation in CTA and local chapter activities.

"For example, how can our union support members who need sign language interpreters, or who are hard of hearing or visually impaired?"

One in seven, or 14%, of California public school students currently receive disability services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), close to the 15% nationwide. IDEA was signed into law in 1975 and re-authorized in 1990 and 2004. While Congress committed to covering 40% of IDEA costs, it has never funded more than 17%. Advocacy groups such as the IDEA Alliance point out that full funding would bring \$30 billion



annually to schools, resulting in better outcomes for students with disabilities and improved conditions for special education educators.

“Full funding of IDEA would allow for the level of support students with disabilities require but do not always get and services that are currently not funded but are needed,” says Crawford.

Crawford looks forward to expanded opportunities to educate fellow union members and communities about how everyone has value and can contribute to society, and that those with disabilities should have equal opportunities to engage with others — including at school, to attend college and to find fulfilling employment. ■

“Crip Camp” & the Disability Revolution

IN THE EARLY

1970s, teenagers with disabilities faced a future shaped by isolation, discrimination and institutionalization. Camp Jened, a camp “for the handicapped” (a term no longer used) in the Catskills,

exploded those confines. Jened offered summertime sports, smoking and make-out sessions, and campers experienced liberation and full inclusion as human beings. Many of them migrated West to Berkeley, California — a hotbed of activism — where they realized that disruption, civil disobedience and political participation could start a “disability revolution” and change the future for millions.

The documentary “Crip Camp” (2020) is the story of one group of people from Camp Jened whose actions helped spark the Disability Rights Movement.

▼ A scene from “Crip Camp.”



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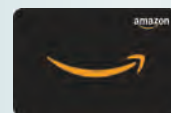
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◀ From the ABC10 investigative report “The Wild West of Education.”

State Audit Confirms Massive Fraud at Twin Rivers Charter School

Twin Rivers United Educators’ alerts about charter fraud spark change to schools, district and state oversight

A CALIFORNIA STATE audit report in June found Highlands Community Charter and Technical Schools (HCCTS) in the Twin Rivers Unified School District received more than \$180 million in public education funds it was not eligible for.

The audit, requested in May 2024 by four state legislators, confirmed Twin Rivers United Educators (TRUE) members’ repeated alerts to the school board about fraud and waste at HCCTS. TRUE actions led to a 10-part ABC10 investigation, “The Wild West of Education,” that uncovered excessive spending, nepotism, a toxic work environment, and poor student outcomes. (The investigation won a 2024 CTA John Swett Award for Media Excellence.)

According to officials, student outcomes at HCCTS were so low that they dragged down California’s statewide graduation rate for the 2023–24 school year.

Following release of the audit, Brittoni Ward, incoming TRUE president, spoke to the Twin Rivers school board, saying, “Our community deserves better. We deserve a superintendent who is trustworthy and leads by example in transparency. We deserve administrative staff who listen to educators when concerns are raised about bad practices. We deserve school board members who listen to the community and hold district admin accountable for their actions.”

Ward and TRUE called on the superintendent to “do the right thing for the students of Highlands.”

“Our educators demand accountability. Our students demand integrity. And our community demands transparency.”

In the wake of the ABC10 report last year, TRUE members mobilized to unseat a corrupt, longtime school board trustee. Linda Fowler, a Twin Rivers trustee who also served on the charter’s board and had been instrumental in its founding in 2014, was being paid a hefty consulting fee by the charter — a direct conflict of interest. Even after departing the board, she continued as a school employee in work the state Fair Political Practices Commission called questionable. TRUE’s endorsed candidate ousted Fowler in March 2024 with 55% of the vote.

The state audit found that in addition to receiving millions in inappropriate state funds after lax oversight by state and local educational agencies, some expenses by the schools violated state law and posed conflicts of interest. HCCTS also had major problems with teacher credentialing and attendance-keeping.

The audit report states, “We determined that Highlands received more than \$180 million in K–12 funds for which it was not eligible, it engaged in wasteful spending, and it assigned teachers to classes for which they did not hold

“Our educators demand accountability. Our students demand integrity. And our community demands transparency.”

—TRUE President-elect **Brittoni Ward**



appropriate credentials. Additionally, we found that Twin Rivers and other oversight agencies did not provide adequate oversight of Highlands.”

HCCTS is a nonprofit that operates the Highlands Community Charter School, where students learn in traditional classrooms, and the California Innovative Career Academy, which offers independent study under the Twin Rivers school district. In Fall 2024 HCCTS was serving 13,700 students age 22 and older and 700 staff at more than 50 locations across the state. ■

Keep Public Charter Funds With Students and Educators: **YES on AB 84**

IN THE COMING WEEKS, state legislators will be voting on two pieces of crucial legislation that will impact public school charters. We urge you to send a letter to your legislators to **Vote NO on SB 414** and **YES on AB 84!**

Assembly Bill 84 (Muratsuchi, D-66) addresses the issues that led to the 2019 A3 Education scandal, where nonprofit charter operator A3 Education defrauded the public of over \$400 million. And just recently the State Auditor reported that Highlands Community Charter and Technical Schools misused over \$180 million of taxpayer funds. Thanks to the input of CTA members who work in charter schools, AB 84 also helps ensure that California’s education dollars are spent on direct educational instruction and supports for students, and not on such things as wasteful no-bid contracts and out-of-state management company fees.

Senate Bill 414 (Ashby, D-8) lets charter operators off the hook and only makes minor changes to the audit process without addressing loopholes in the system that allowed for fraud and abuse. It also gives charter schools immunity from most lawsuits.

State Budget: Our Fight for Education Funding Continues

IN LATE JUNE, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed off on the final 2025–26 State budget. CTA President David Goldberg issued a statement expressing disappointment with the inclusion of a funding maneuver that leaves schools vulnerable to lower funding next year and urged the governor and the Legislature to not delay payment of billions of dollars to California’s public schools.

“The budget signed by the governor includes a funding maneuver that re-routes and defers Prop. 98 dollars,” Goldberg said. “We are disappointed at the continued attempts to manipulate Prop. 98 money constitutionally owed to schools. This opens the door to future reductions in education funding at a time when we need our schools to be safe and stable places for all.”

Prop. 98, passed in 1988, guarantees a minimum level of funding for public K–12 schools and community colleges each year. The law aims to stabilize education

funding and ensure that schools receive a consistent level of support.

“Attempts in this budget agreement to weaken the constitutional protections behind the Prop. 98 funding guarantee would harm public schools and likely lead to increased class sizes, teacher layoffs, cuts to librarians, counselors, nurses and other integral support staff,” Goldberg said.

“We know that our schools and communities need more funding, not less. With the likelihood that the budget will be revisited later this year, we urge the governor and the Legislature to uphold the California constitution and adhere to the will of the voters and not delay payment of billions of dollars to California’s public schools.”

Read our full statement at cta.org/statebudget. Stay tuned for updates and more information about our school funding fight in the coming months.

SUMMER 2025

CALENDAR

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT is often a priority at summer conferences — and at CTA programs, a great opportunity to build union power! Take a look at a few possibilities:

CTA Summer Institute

JULY 16-20 *The Westin Bonaventure Los Angeles.*

CTA's premier training offers sessions and activities to hone the skills needed to meet the challenges of the coming year — in both education and labor. Summer Institute offers full-week trainings at the Westin Bonaventure in downtown Los Angeles. The various strands assist chapter leaders in the day-to-day representation and support of members, and include:

- Communications
- Economic Justice
- Emerging Leaders
- Instruction and Professional Development (IPD)
- Member Benefits



Many strands are nearing capacity, so sign up now at cta.org/conferences. Questions? Contact SummerInstitute@cta.org.

Navigating National Boards

JULY 16-20 *The Westin Bonaventure Los Angeles.* Get a jump on your National Boards for 2025-26. Learn all about what becoming a National Board Certified Teacher entails at a special program that is part of CTA's Summer Institute (attend the IPD strand keynotes in the morning and NBCT as the elective). ▶ cta.org/nbct

Presidents Conference

JULY 31-AUG. 3 **CONFERENCE**

Hyatt Regency, SFO. This conference is for local leaders and is designed to enhance your skills as a chapter president/vice president and help build systems of success for your local. New and returning leaders

will have a foundation to rely upon as we prepare for future challenges.

▶ cta.org/conferences

QTEL Summer Institute

JULY 21-25 *Santa Cruz*

WestEd's Quality Teaching for English Learners team offers professional development supporting education for English learners. Participants experience and understand powerful models of learning which they can turn into school practices that cultivate global competencies and academic development for English learners and all students. Sessions fill quickly; be sure to add your name to the waitlists.

▶ qtel.wested.org/2025-qtel-summer-institutes

California MTSS Professional Learning Institute

JULY 22-24 *Anaheim*

The theme of this year's California MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) conference is "Unite, Empower, Impact." Educators, administrators, school counselors and psychologists, county office of education leaders, and community-based organizations come together to support inclusive and equitable learning environments while fostering academic excellence.

▶ ocde.us/MTSS/Pages/Overview.aspx

▼ This year's class, from left to right: Eduardo Picazo, Assn. of Ed. Office & Tech. Emp. (AEOTE); Lauren Ritchey-Moyer and Martin Fuentes-Ortiz, both with Steele Canyon ESPA; Justine Ray Madarang, United Educators San Francisco; Eric Meisner, Assn. of Clovis Educators (ACE); Cecilia Tejada, Coalition of Educators for Change; Cherise Morris, AEOTE; Miranda Meisner-Garza, ACE; Emily Nascimento, CTA staff; Anabel Delgadillo, AEOTE; Sarah Maricle, ACE; Danielle Thomas, AEOTE; Stevi Rivera, Redlands ESPA; Shonda Harrar, ACE; Peter Ruiz, Steele Canyon ESPA; Scott Maas, ACE.



ESP Leadership Academy — Class of 2025

CTA's **ESP Leadership Academy** provides an opportunity for Education Support Professional members interested in taking on leadership roles in their local CTA chapter. The annual training focuses on leadership skills, giving participants tools to help their local organization deal with current union and educational issues. For information about the academy, visit cta.org/esp.



CTA Presidents #FightForSchools

IN LATE MAY, local presidents walked the halls of the State Capitol to lobby on behalf of our students, educators and public education. Supporting our union's #FightForSchools campaign, they met with legislators to demand protection for funding for public schools. Read more about our #FightForSchools on page 6.

CTA ELECTION RESULTS

ON JUNE 7, the following elections took place during CTA State Council. All positions' term of office is June 26, 2025–June 25, 2028:

CTA Board of Directors, District D
Elected — **Mara Harvey**

CTA Board of Directors, District L
Elected — **Ken Tang**

CTA/ABC Committee Member, At-Large
Elected — **Gardy Borromeo**

Also, the bylaw amendment to Article XVI, Section 1, passed (see Council report in the May 2025 issue, page 47).





INVESTING IN PUBLIC EDUCATION PROTECTS ENROLLMENT

ANNUAL ENROLLMENT DATA released by the state Dept. of Education in May shows that investing in critical programs for students that our union has fought for over the years has helped slow overall school enrollment decline.

The most significant trend in the 2024–25 data reflects an increased demand for specific education initiatives, such as Transitional Kindergarten (TK), Dual Language Immersion (DLI) and Expanded Learning programs.

“The dramatic growth in TK shows that providing rigorous and quality programs can be key to bringing more families back to our schools,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond. He added that expansion of DLI programs is another strategy “to drive future enrollment growth by providing school programs that are in high demand from California’s families.”

In the 2024–25 school year, overall student enrollment declined by 0.54% compared to the year prior, representing a slowing of declining school enrollment. Though this change is minimal, the difference between current year enrollment and pre-pandemic enrollment remains significant.

Even as overall enrollment has fallen, TK enrollment continues to boom, with a year-over-year increase of 17.2%. The number of LEAs offering TK at school sites has increased to 85%, and as TK expansion creates more spaces in state preschool, enrollment continues to rise.

DLI programs have shown significant growth statewide: As of 2023–24, there were 1,036 DLI programs in California, a 39% increase from 747 DLI programs in 2018–19.

Recent local data shows that the expansion of Expanded Learning programs, which include before- and after-school, summer, and intersession learning programs, mirrors trends in TK and DLI expansion: As the number of seats increases, they are filled. In Elk Grove Unified, broadened access to Expanded Learning programs has increased program enrollment from 3,300 to 12,000 — a 264% increase.

These data points offer insights into in-demand educational initiatives and a potential path to reversing long-term school enrollment trends.



Prof. Jesus Valle

NEA Human & Civil Rights Award:

JESUS VALLE

JESUS VALLE, professor of Native American Studies at Sacramento’s American River College, is the 2025 winner of NEA’s Wilma Mankiller Memorial Award. He is one of several educators honored with NEA’s Human and Civil Rights awards.

Valle, an enrolled citizen of the Texas band of Yaqui Indians, has developed initiatives that give Northern California Indigenous youth a stronger sense of community. He established a Native Resource Center, supporting students whose needs are often not acknowledged in higher or public education. He has created programs and workshops to help enlighten the community.

Valle’s most life-affirming initiative is his American Indian Summer Institute. This five-day retreat has transformed lives, putting college-bound students in the mix of area universities that have an appreciation of Indigenous culture.

Valle is co-chair and founding member of the Sacramento Native American Higher Education Collaborative. Through SNAHEC, he successfully lobbied for \$30 million in state funding for the Native American Student Support and Success Program.

For more about Valle and to learn about the other winners, visit nea.org and search for “human and civil rights awards.”

Outstanding Contributions

CTA's 2024 Member- and Chapter-in-Politics Awards

By Amy Peruzzaro

THIS PAST APRIL several members and locals were recognized with the 2024 Member-in-Politics Award in Honor of Ted Bass and the Chapter-in-Politics Award in Honor of Joyce Fadem.

The Chapter-in-Politics Award, named for the late CTA director of Governmental Relations Joyce Fadem, honors locals that make outstanding contributions to their communities across the state through exemplary organizing in political campaigns.

The Member-in-Politics Awards is named for the late CTA political consultant Ted Bass and recognizes outstanding teachers in politics for their effective organizing in political campaigns.

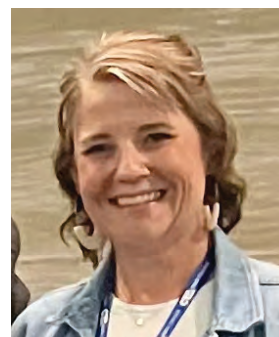
Member-in-Politics Awards

▼ Political Involvement Committee Chair Roger McCoy and Lonny Johnson



LONNY JOHNSON, *Selma Unified Teachers Assn.*, received the "Overall Award." Johnson has held various leadership roles within SUTA including site representative, negotiations chair, Political Action Committee (PAC) chair and vice president. Johnson was instrumental in establishing SUTA's PAC, which has been a critical part of supporting pro-education candidates for school board elections. Johnson has also worked closely with the California School Employees Assn. and is a chairperson of the Strategic Initiatives Committee within the Fresno County Democratic Central Committee.

KRISTINA TAYLOR, *Anderson Cascade Teachers Assn.*, is the recipient of the "Getting Others Involved Award." Taylor was responsible for hosting most of the campaign activities for her local's initiative to embrace political engagement and contacted members about potential candidates for the Cascade school board. She also led an inclusive campaign to foster more political engagement among members.



Kristina Taylor

CELIA GREENE, *Burbank Teachers Association*, received the "State Priorities Award." Greene met with legislators several times on behalf of educators and students to reaffirm their commitments to not reduce the education budget and not harm student success. She canvassed and phone banked for a Burbank school board race, and participated in candidate interviews for Burbank Unified school board and Burbank City Council.



Celia Greene





Melinda Daly

MELINDA DALY, *San Ramon Valley Education Assn.*, is the recipient of the "Local Priorities Award." Daly was instrumental in the successful reelection of two pro-education school board members. She also organized educators, parents and community stakeholders to pass Measure Q, a renewal of the district's parcel tax to extend school funding.

For more information about CTA's Member- and Chapter-in-Politics awards, visit cta.org/awards.



CARRIE TARGHETTA, *Oceanside Teachers Assn.*, received the "Partisan/Non-Partisan Activities Award." Targhetta, a member of the local Democratic Club and the non-partisan group Indivisible 49, is active in annual voter registration activities for students and community members. Also, in the last election cycle she organized precinct walks and other activities in support of recommended school board candidates.



AUDREY JACQUES, *Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Assn.*, received the "Coalition Building Award." Jacques is FSUTA's vice president and organizing chair, and a vice president on the Napa-Solano Central Labor Council's executive board. She has helped strengthen the partnership between FSUTA and the council. Jacques is also working with school districts to connect Career and Technical Education students with the trades.

▼ FMEA President Tuan-Anh Huynh.



Chapter-in-Politics Awards

Franklin-McKinley Education Assn. received the "Rookie Chapter" award. FMEA, with its 340 members located in the heart of the Silicon Valley, became involved in the campaign process by applying for and receiving CTA/ABC funds to produce a joint mailer and 6,000 walk pieces for their canvassing efforts. Over 5,000 door knocks later, their efforts resulted in the defeat of a Moms for Liberty-backed candidate for a school board seat. This not only demonstrated to FMEA what unity can accomplish but also set in place structures to lead to success for FMEA in future elections.

Continued on Page 36

▼ Student journalists from Oxford Academy's The Gamut were nominated by Anaheim Secondary Teachers Assn. Left to right: ASTA President Geoff Morganstern; Oxford Academy's Elizabeth Hind; CTA Vice President Leslie Littman; students Nathan Perera, Celine Park and Haley Nguyen; CTA Board Member Angela Der Ramos; CCA President and State Council Communications Chair Randa Wahbe.



Good News

The John Swett Awards for Media Excellence

THE 2024 JOHN SWETT MEDIA AWARDS were celebrated at the recent CTA State Council in June. The annual awards recognize outstanding coverage of public education, community colleges and the labor movement by news media. Named after the founder of CTA and California's fourth superintendent of public instruction, the Swett awards are nominated by local CTA chapters.

2024 Award Recipients

SWETT WINNERS

▼ Left to right: Corey Penrose (representing Vacaville Teachers Assn., which nominated Richard Bammer); Leslie Littman; Bammer.



Best Feature Story or Series (Print or Digital)
Richard Bammer, The Vacaville Reporter, "At Vaca Pena, Holocaust Survivor Story Comes to Life in Vivid Detail"

▼ Left to right: Andie Judson; Der Ramos; Wahbe



Best Investigative Reporting (Print or Digital)
Andie Judson, ABC10, "The Wild West of Education: An Investigation Into Highlands Community Charter and Technical Schools"



Continued on Page 36

Awards, Continued from Page 34

CTA/NEA-Retired Chico

received the "Small Chapter" award. Located in the Northern Sacramento Valley with over 300 members, the local launched in 2016 and immediately established a Political Action Committee. It has since been involved in campaigns to support pro-education candidates and legislation. Most recently, in 2024 after extremists launched a well-funded campaign to win the majority of seats on the Chico Unified school board, Chico Unified Teachers Assn. and CTA/NEA-Retired Chico joined forces to recruit candidates, write 11,000 postcards and mobilize support for the endorsed candidates. The result: All three endorsed candidates won. CTA/NEA-Retired Chico is now poised to grow in strength with their coalition partners.



CTA/NEA-Retired Chico
President Deborah Burfeind

Burbank Teachers Association

received the "Medium Chapter" award. Based in the San Fernando Valley with over 700 members, BTA met with their elected representatives during the last election cycle to advocate for educators and students, focusing on issues such as preventing member layoffs and stopping funding cuts. Chapter members mobilized for the reelection of Dr. Armond Aghakhanian for the Burbank school board and the passage of Measure ABC, a bond to renovate aging school facilities, and campaigned on behalf of city council incumbent Konstantine Anthony. The chapter continues to organize at all school sites with the creation of Battle Action Teams in preparation for future challenges.



BTA President
Nicole Drabecki

Swett, Continued from Page 35

Best News Story or Series (Broadcast or Podcast)

Jessica Harrington, ABC30, "Senior Success Story: Atwater Grad Excels Despite Devastating Loss, Major Family Health Scare" and "Senior Success Story: Clovis North Senior Overcomes Housing Instability to Reach Graduation"

Best News Story or Series (Print or Digital)

Howard Blume, Los Angeles Times, "LAUSD's Black Student Achievement Program Upended, Targeted by Conservative Virginia Group"

MERIT WINNERS

Best Feature Story or Series (Broadcast or Podcast)

Mariana Dale, LAist, "Teachers Unions Often Pick Winning School Board Candidates. Will This LAUSD Election Be Different?"

Best Student Journalism (in all forms)

The Gamut, "Limited You: AUHSD Fails Its Students, Teachers, and Self"

▼ Left to right: CTA Board Member Eva Ruiz; Anthony Misner from Yosemite Unified Teachers Assn., which nominated Jessica Harrington.



For more information about CTA's John Swett Awards for Media Excellence, visit cta.org/awards.



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