



HOW “EDUCATIONAL REFORM” IN CALIFORNIA MAY AFFECT YOU

Many of the educational reforms in California can potentially benefit our students and you as their teacher, but some of the proposals before Californians and the Legislature could result in financial and professional harm to the teaching profession in California and to you as an individual. This summary is only meant to point out some of the challenges that teachers may be facing in the near future and the effects on the individual teacher.

Changes to Prop 98 – School Financing How will this affect you? The salary and benefits of every teacher is directly tied to the amount of money each district receives from the state. Since Proposition 13, very few districts rely on funding from property taxes. Currently Prop 98 guarantees that 40% of the state budget will be spent on education. Dollars from the state must be divided between student interests and teacher compensation. As we have seen in the past, modifications to this formula have profound effects on students and teachers.

Constitutional Amendment to modify State Public Employee Retirement Benefits -How will this affect you? If you are a veteran teacher, this will affect you very little, if at all, because of the “contract clause” of the U.S. and California Constitutions. If you are a new or “soon-to-be-hired” teacher, it could have profound effects on your retirement. According to the Legislative Analyst’s Office, it could prevent any retirement benefits from coming to you if you retire before the age of 62, and your pension could be reduced to no more than 60% of your salary, no matter how many years you have taught.

Tenure Reform - SB 955: How will this affect you? It would “remove the seniority provision and allow districts to lay-off teachers based on subject needs and teacher effectiveness, and would give school boards the final say when firing a teacher. “ This would make every teacher a probationary teacher for life. We all agree that the district should be able to dismiss ineffective teachers through due process, but this tenure reform would have a profound effect on the security of effective teachers as well. Remember when you were a probationary teacher and the stress and anxiety you experienced at the end of the year? Even if you were a great teacher, you never knew if you would be hired back. Imagine that for your entire career. There are better ways to address the issue of ineffective teachers.

The Paycheck Protection Initiative – There are few teachers left in the profession that remember the “good old days” when teachers were paid and treated like second class citizens.

With the advent of Collective Bargaining in 1975, teachers began to have a voice in the conditions of their employment, but there was little change in salaries and benefits. Real change did not occur until teachers, through their local and state teachers' associations, had the money to influence the state legislature to pass laws that 1) guaranteed education funding at a level that would provide resources for teachers to be paid as professionals and that 2) ensured that teachers be treated as professionals. The financial resources that became available to influence legislation in support of these measures came from the combined contribution by all teachers to NEA/CTA/APLE through **automatic payroll deduction**. Before that teachers had little, if any, influence on state legislators and, thus, had little control over their own profession. There are not many teachers that want a return to the good old days of teachers being treated with little respect, but without payroll deductions to influence the policy makers that could happen. The Paycheck Protection Initiative would eliminate the automatic deduction for union dues and require all members to submit a form every year requesting that dues be automatically deducted from their accounts. Even in the unlikely situation where everyone would immediately complete these forms, this would require a mountain of paperwork, filing, and record keeping which could take months. The gap in funding that would ensue between years would seriously deplete CTA resources and hamstring any attempt to positively influence policymakers. Of course, this is what our opponents would want and why they are supporting this initiative.

Without the constant action of CTA as your advocate in Sacramento, your salary, health benefits and job security would not be where they are today. We are in serious jeopardy of losing control over our profession and regressing to decades ago when educators were not considered professionals. CTA recognizes the need for reform, but they believe that teachers and their associations must be a major part of those conversations. Each and every teacher needs to be vigilant and active to prevent a dramatic decline in the status of teachers. Your Association needs your input and support in order to ensure that teachers are paid fairly and treated with the respect their profession has earned and deserves.