

Shortly before November 7, 2006, Election Day

Dear

If you haven't already voted, please take a few minutes and read this letter. You know me. I try to stay informed about California politics. I need to, because as an educator, when Sacramento sneezes, I get a cold. About two-thirds of the funding for local K-12 public schools and community colleges comes from California's state budget.

This means that it really matters to me, and to the students of this state, who is elected to the statewide offices, as well as to State Senate and Assembly seats. These people make decisions that deeply affect my life, and the lives of millions of students.

Last year Arnold Schwarzenegger and his allies in the state legislature decided to follow the philosophy of ultra-conservative activist Grover Norquist, who calls for "starving the beast" of government. They cut the education budget by billions of dollars, and tried to pull the plug on the retirement pensions of all public employees in California. That would have meant trading my modest but stable defined benefit pension for the uncertainties of a 401k.

As you know, we fought back. We beat him in his special election. We forced Schwarzenegger and friends to back down on the pension scheme, and to pay back public education for the money he borrowed. Since that time, Schwarzenegger has tried to remake his public image, working with Democrats in the legislature and seemingly becoming a moderate Democrat himself.

Don't believe it. In recent weeks, as he opened a lead in the polls over Phil Angelides, thanks to his new image, Schwarzenegger has revealed on several occasions that he hasn't really changed. During the televised debate with Angelides he let slip he still believes his special election ballot measures were "good ideas." In an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 12) he mentioned he would return to his public employee pension "reform" agenda if he won reelection. And the following day, in the *San Diego Union Tribune*, Schwarzenegger said he would revisit rolling back teacher tenure and redistricting.

The polls are not looking good for Angelides. Many friends of mine seem to be giving up. Some are saying they're not even sure they will vote. This would be a big mistake. Not only would this become a self-fulfilling prophecy for the gubernatorial contest, which Angelides can still win, but there are a couple other very important races. Sensing the vulnerability of the other Democrats on the state ticket, right wing forces are pumping big bucks into the campaigns for Lieutenant Governor and Controller. I'm asking you to vote for John Garamendi for Lieutenant Governor, and for John Chiang for Controller. These candidates are tried and true friends of public education.

By contrast, the Republican candidates in these races—Tom McClintock and Tony Strickland—are seriously anti-public education, anti-public employee, and anti-

environment. They are far out of step with the California mainstream. McClintock not only opposes increasing the minimum wage, he favors *eliminating* the minimum wage. Strickland led the charge for Schwarzenegger's pension cuts. One of his backers is Intuit software, which opposes Chiang's efforts to streamline the state income tax filing process for low income voters because that would cut into Intuit's tax software sales. Some people may be in doubt as to what kind of Republican Schwarzenegger really is, but there is no mistaking McClintock and Strickland. They are from the far right, and would be delighted to do every bit of damage they could to government as a helping institution.

Please take some time between now and Tuesday to help. I'm asking you to vote for Angelides, Garamendi, and Chiang, but also to spread the word. Talk with family, friends, and neighbors, and let them know what's at stake.

Yours for education,