

Why CFT supports Jerry Brown for Governor

When Jerry Brown was governor of California—just one chapter in his lifetime of public service—California’s K-12 schools and higher education systems received adequate funding and delivered on the promise of the state’s master plans for education.

Of course, this was not all Brown’s doing. The 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education, which laid out the principle that free higher education was a right for all Californians who chose to pursue it, was drafted during the first (Pat) Brown administration. And the dominant paradigm in that era—unlike in the past thirty years—supported the notions that government existed to help, and funding schools properly represented an investment in our collective future well-being. Jerry Brown’s ability to govern well rested on this consensus. But Brown moved the ball farther down the field, too.

Brown’s Legacy

Among other accomplishments, Brown signed SB 160, the Educational Employment Relations Act,

which enabled school employees to negotiate collective bargaining agreements with school and community college districts. This was an historic achievement of labor rights for enormous groups of working

people who had been left out of the National Labor Relations Act, and forms the basis of what economic leverage remains today for public school employees in the Great Recession.

Brown made major investments in the California education system. Under Brown’s leadership, funding for K-12 education quadrupled, and he substantially expanded funding for the University of California and California State University systems. Brown also oversaw

Grant awards by 50%, helping more low-income students attend college.

Jerry Brown has a direct understanding of community college issues; his first elected office was as a trustee on the Board of the Los Angeles Community

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Photo: Lambert W. Li

Proposition 25: Majority Vote Budget

Californians are angry at the Legislature because our elected officials are not doing one of the most important parts of their job: devising a state budget in a timely fashion. But what most people don’t know is that legislators are prevented from performing this aspect of their job. A requirement that 2/3 of the Legislature is needed to pass a state budget has created political gridlock through a tyranny of the minority. The Majority Vote Budget Act would restore democracy to Sacramento and break open the gridlock through majority rule.

Only three out of fifty states require a 2/3 vote for a budget. Changing California to majority rule would bring back a functioning government. We elect legislators through majority rule, and in a democracy they should be able to conduct their work through majority rule.

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For more information or to talk to an educator for CFT’s perspective about the November election contact:

Fred Glass 510/523-5238
 Steve Hopcraft 916/457-5546

Proposition 25: *(From Page 1)*

What kind of damage can an ideologically inclined minority do by holding up the budget process? We only have to look at 2009. As the budget stalemate dragged on, the legislative majority grew increasingly concerned about a looming shutdown of state services to the disabled, the sick, and the elderly. To prevent this from happening, the majority agreed to \$1.7 billion in corporate tax loopholes demanded by the minority. These loopholes benefit a tiny number of large corporations, at the expense of adequately funding schools, public safety, and public health programs.

It's happening again this year. As reported by the *San Francisco Chronicle* on September 28, legislative sources reveal, "Republicans negotiating the state budget are demanding tax breaks for companies, such as cable television providers and oil producers."

Such actions result in the budget deadlocks we experience each year, and bleeding of revenue sources necessary for public services. As a result, the CFT, along with a number of allies, is proposing reform of this dysfunctional budget process. Under Prop 25,

- the undemocratic and unworkable legislative two-thirds vote on the state budget would become a simple majority, like it is in almost every other state;
- Legislators would forfeit their pay permanently for each day the budget is late;
- the two-thirds requirement for raising taxes (a separate constitutional law) would be maintained; separate action will be required in a future election to address the issue of adequate revenue for education and other social services through progressive tax policies.

"Prop. 25, we believe, will not lead to majority-vote tax increase, but will significantly improve the chances that future California budgets will pass on time and deserves a yes vote on Nov. 2." *Contra Costa Times* editorial, Sept. 10, 2010

"Prop. 25 would help ease the budget gridlock and deserves passage.

"Proposition 25 would end the supermajority requirement on the budget but keep it in place for tax hikes. (Opponents of the measure falsely claim that it would do away with the two-thirds rule on taxes too, but their absurd legal arguments were demolished by the 3rd District Court of Appeal...Supermajority budgeting rules served a purpose in a less partisan age, but now they have all but brought state government to a standstill. Vote yes on Proposition 25..." *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 30, 2010

Coalition partners, in addition to CFT, include California Nurses Association, California Professional Firefighters, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters, California State PTA, and many others. 

BROWN FOR GOVERNOR *(From Page 1)*


College District. This may explain why Brown as governor improved funding for apprenticeship programs and established the California Worksite Education and Training Act (CWETA). CWETA provided job-training programs and jobs to college students in areas such as farming, electronics, and nursing.

Brown wants to turn around the trends that have been moving in the wrong direction for decades. As he said recently, "When I was governor, the price students paid for a higher education was a fraction of what it is today. At that time, the state devoted 3 to 4 times more to higher education than to prisons; today that ratio is even. That's not right." Brown is also committed to encouraging the State Board of Education to provide better support for English learners and promises to expand after-school and summer school programs to complement English Learning programs.

By contrast with Brown's progressive actions, his

opponent in the November election, Meg Whitman, offers an extension of Arnold Schwarzenegger's corporate-oriented, anti-education, anti-union agenda, only worse. Whitman says the first thing she'll do if she becomes governor is slash the jobs of 40,000 nurses, teachers, librarians and other state workers. And she wants to increase funding to higher education—by cutting a billion dollars from services to the poorest Californians!

Unlike Jerry Brown, who has the experience of serving the people of California in local and state elected offices for decades, Meg Whitman has so little concern for the issues facing ordinary California families that she couldn't even bother to register—let alone vote—in most California elections. She now agrees that this was "wrong."

CFT concurs. That's why we support Brown for governor. 

NO on Prop. 26

Polluters Should Pay For The Harm They Cause

As if we don't have enough trouble in California due to our status as the only state in the nation that requires a 2/3 vote both to increase taxes and to pass a state budget, here's yet another nasty example of enormous corporations attempting to reduce democracy in the legislative process, and to increase corporate influence, by creating yet another 2/3 bar.


Currently it takes a simple majority of the Legislature or a local government agency to levy a mitigation fee on a business activity that harms the environment, public health or safety. Prop. 26 would reclassify these fees as taxes, therefore making them subject to approval by two-thirds of the Legislature for state fees or by a two-thirds majority vote in a local election for local fees.

Big oil, tobacco and alcohol producers spent over \$2 million to qualify Prop. 26 for the ballot—and are spending millions more to win in November. The

measure would shift the costs of pollution cleanup or remedying harm to public health from industry onto the rest of us.

If Prop. 26 had already been law, it would have taken 2/3 for fees on paint manufacturers to test children for exposure to lead paint, and fees on oil companies to enforce used oil recycling programs.

According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, Proposition 26 would blow an additional billion-dollar hole into the state budget.


Proposition 26 closely resembles Prop. 37, which appeared before voters ten years ago. CFT belonged to a progressive coalition of labor, consumer, environmental, and public health groups that defeated it. This year, big oil, tobacco and alcohol corporations plan to spend even more money to pass Prop. 26. 

Yes on Prop. 24 – The Tax Fairness Act

During the 2009 state budget disaster, Sacramento politicians and big corporations cut a deal behind closed doors to give huge tax breaks to some of the state's largest corporations. This deal with legislators was deferred for two years, but will mean \$1.7 billion in tax breaks yearly for the state's biggest and wealthiest corporations, starting in 2011.

Prop. 24, the Tax Fairness Act, proposes instead to keep our Legislature from making deeper cuts to public schools and services by repealing these harmful special corporate tax loopholes.

These corporations made no guarantees that a single job would be created or saved to get this handout. The corporations receive these tax breaks, but can still send jobs overseas or to other states.

In 1980, California corporations contributed nearly 15% of the state budget through fair tax revenues. Today, before enactment of the provisions of this tax loophole, corporate tax revenue is down to 11% of the state budget. When large corporations pay less, ordinary California taxpayers pay more. Prop. 24 will end tax loopholes that unfairly benefit a tiny number of California's wealthiest corporations. Voting yes on Prop. 24 puts our public schools, health care and safety ahead of unnecessary and unreasonable tax breaks for large corporations. 

CFT November 2010 Statewide Election Recommendations

Governor

Edmund "Jerry" Brown (D)

Lieutenant Governor

Gavin Newsom (D)

Secretary of State

Debra Bowen (D)

Attorney General

Kamala Harris (D)

Controller

John Chiang (D)

Treasurer

Bill Lockyer (D)

Insurance Commissioner

Dave Jones (D)

Supt. of Public Instruction

Tom Torlakson



NR 19 Legalize Marijuana

NO 20 Redistrict Congressional Districts

YES 21 VLF Surcharge for State Parks

NR 22 Prohibit the State from Taking Local Funds

NO 23 Suspend Air Pollution Control Laws (AB 32)

YES 24 Repeal Corporate Tax Loopholes

YES 25 Majority Vote Budget

NO 26 Two-Thirds Vote Requirement for Fees

YES 27 Eliminate Commission on Redistricting

Board of Equalization:

District 1 Betty Yee (D)

District 2 Chris Parker (D)

District 3 No Recommendation

District 4 Jerome Horton

VAMing Teachers in Los Angeles

By Gary Ravani, president CFT Early Childhood/K-12 Council

Recently the Bureau of Land Management, at the encouragement of a group of House members, asked the National Research Council (NRC) to review its policies for wild horses and burros. If only someone would show the same kind of concern about the nation's school children and education. Actually the NRC, the highest scientific body in the nation, developed an unsolicited review of test use in teacher evaluation to include in a letter to Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

The NRC cautioned against an over-reliance on test scores in making high-stakes decisions on teachers. As the NRC put it: "Although the idea has intuitive appeal, a great deal is unknown about the potential and the limitations of alternative statistical models for evaluating teachers."

The NRC specifically questioned the use of "value added methodology" (VAM), a technique using student test scores over several years to assess "teacher effectiveness." NRC doubts VAM is "fair, reliable, and valid."

And then along came stories in the *L.A. Times*. The stories contained the *Times*'s public ratings of LAUSD teachers using VAM.

The *Times* relied on a moonlighting economist from RAND to crunch the numbers. (He has since repudiated the *Time*'s use of his work.) This in spite of the fact that RAND stated in a 2005 study: "the research base is currently insufficient to support the use of [VAM] for high-stakes decisions about individual teachers..."

The American Educational Research Association, and other groups involved in testing, has guidelines for the use of standardized tests. These guidelines include: 1) don't use tests designed to do one thing

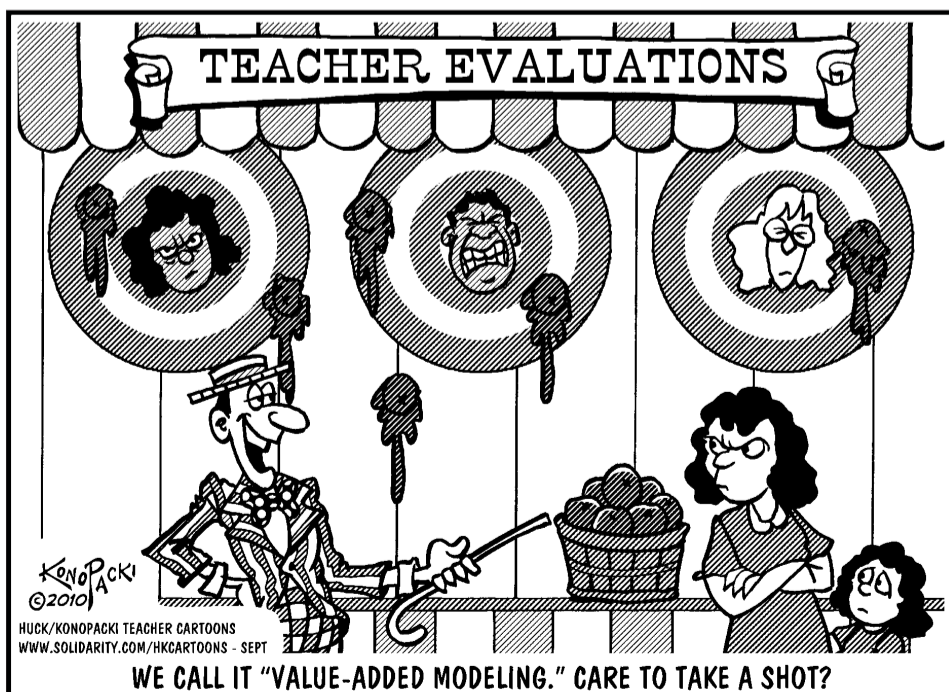
(assess student achievement) to do something else (measure teacher effectiveness); and, 2) don't use any single assessment to make high stakes decisions. The *Times*'s actions violate these guidelines.

Since the *Times* published the story, experts from across the nation have weighed in condemning its actions. The Economic Policy Institute gathered twenty experts, ranging from academia to the commercial testing industry, who assert that even with the most sophisticated analysis student test scores are too unreliable and inaccurate for use in evaluating teachers. Fifteen other California university scholars responded in an opinion piece that VAM "is not exact enough to justify identifying individual teachers as "effective" or "ineffective."

Almost everyone agrees the tests we use need overhauling. They over-emphasize short term memory of facts and under-emphasize critical thinking skills. Experts agree that tying more teacher accountability to these tests drives more teaching to the tests. This has led to a dangerous narrowing of curriculum. Particularly in distressed communities the teaching of science, history, music, and art have been eliminated. The use of VAM can only exacerbate this narrowing.

The *Times* insists that VAM is objective and rigorous. A policy with little scientific reliability or validity is transformed via some weird alchemy into sound public policy by ratcheting down on rigor. The *Times* has been dinged repeatedly for eliminating the journalistic firewall between news, business, and opinion. Once again the *Times* presents its editorial infatuations as fact, and this time to the detriment of instruction, students, and teachers.

A slightly different version of this article appeared in *The Educated Guess* blog 



H/KT
Cartoons

Waiting for Superman – not

Anyone who has spent time editing stories—print or visual media—knows that often the problem with a well-told tale is not what is said but what is left out.

That’s precisely the difficulty with *Waiting for Superman*, a well-told documentary film tale about public education. If you don’t know anything about teaching, or about teacher unions, or about charter schools, you will come away with a clear picture of what’s wrong with public education: bad teachers, recalcitrant unions, and not enough charter schools.

Davis Guggenheim, who directed *An Inconvenient Truth* with Al Gore, makes a strong argument—emotional, seemingly coherent—about access to decent education. But he does so by ignoring, or not bothering to engage with, another viewpoint: public education has been starved of funding, and under relentless attack by billionaires, conservative ideologists, and the privatizing agenda they represent. As a result public education is in steep decline in this country, and teachers, and teacher unions, have been made into scapegoats for a public policy that privileges low taxes for billionaires and corporations over adequate funding for school children.

At one point in the film we hear the lament that the mighty United States of America can’t do as well as tiny Finland in educating its children. Not noted: that Finland’s public education system is unionized from top to toe—or that Finland’s tax structure is much more progressive than in the U.S., and per pupil funding is considerably higher. Throughout the film a few charter schools are held up as the exemplars for what education could be. Not noted: the definitive study of charter schools vs public schools issued last year, which found that 17% of charter schools performed better than public schools, 37% performed worse, and the rest did about the same (“Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States,” June 2009, Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), Stanford University).

For more analysis of what’s wrong with *Waiting for Superman*, check out the websites of *Rethinking Schools*, <http://www.notwaitingforsuperman.org>, and the national AFT, <http://www.aft.org/notwaiting/index.cfm>.



California education funding is inadequate and getting worse

The Governor and legislators are not raising the revenues necessary to invest in California’s students and protect voter-approved Proposition 98. The 2010-11 State Budget cuts \$4.3 billion more from education, on top of \$17 billion in previous cuts in the past two years. This budget defers \$1.9 billion in required Prop. 98 funding (\$1.7 billion for K-12 and \$189 million for community colleges). Instead of raising new revenues, the state budget hands out more than \$118 million in tax breaks to some of the largest corporations, including tax breaks for Comcast, Microsoft and oil companies.

California’s per-pupil spending has dropped more than 12 percent in the last 4 years, keeping California nearly last in the nation in spending per student. (*California Budget Project*)

Broken promises hurt our students’ education and jeopardize California’s future

- According to a survey conducted by California Watch, a nonprofit independent investigative reporting group, the 30 largest school districts in California have done away with class size reduction (to 20 pupils) for kids in kindergarten through third grade as a result of statewide budget cuts. (*California Watch*, 9.16.10)
- California’s schools rank at the very bottom of all 50 states in staff-to-student ratios, and nearly last in the nation in per-pupil spending. In addition, libraries have been virtually wiped out, while arts, music, sports, advanced placement and other essential programs have been eliminated from the curriculum. (*NEA*, Rankings 2009 and Estimates 2010)
- California students are being denied the individual attention they need to succeed. More than 30,000 educators have been laid off in the past two years, while more than 10,000 critical school site support staff have lost their jobs, meaning students have less adult supervision and fewer resources to help them learn. (Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell news releases 2008, 2009, 2010; *The Daily Journal*, 3.16.10)



California Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
1201 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 115, Alameda, CA 94501



“This year’s budget is one more reason to vote YES on Proposition 25. Once again, a tiny minority of the Legislature has refused to fund education, and has demanded sweetheart deals for corporations in exchange for voting for a state budget.”

*Marty Hittelman
President, California Federation of Teachers*



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The *Media Report* brings you information you need to know on a quarterly basis. For the most current union news, recent media coverage of education issues, and key information about the California Federation of Teachers and its activities, visit the CFT website regularly.

It’s not an either/or. Come see us online.

**California Federation
of Teachers**

Marty Hittelman, President

Phone: (818) 843-8226

CFT Bay Area Headquarters

1201 Marina Village Parkway #115
Alameda, CA 94501

Phone: (510) 523-5238

Fax: (510) 523-5262

Communications Director

Fred Glass

Cell Phone: (510) 579-3343

Media Relations

Steve Hopcraft

Hopcraft Communications

3551 N Street

Sacramento, CA 95816

Phone: (916) 457-5546

Fax: (916) 457-5548