

Legislative Action Program 2009-2010

The California Federation of Teachers takes policy positions on social, economic and cultural issues underlying CFT's mission as defined in its constitution. The Federation demonstrates adherence to these principles in stands it takes on legislation and state ballot propositions, in its endorsements of candidates at all levels of government, and in its distribution of Committee on Political Education (COPE) funds.

We take these positions because education does not take place in a vacuum. Attention to socio-economic issues makes it possible to address educational issues more successfully. Changes in the world, whether political, social, economic or philosophical, affect students and education workers, and thus, the educational process.

Achieving Academic Standards and Improving Student Performance

- **Promote small class sizes and accommodations for students.** Students perform best, and teachers are most effective in smaller classes. Special education classes, in particular, should be smaller. Special education students taking the high school exit exam need unique, individualized accommodations. Underperforming schools and students need the extra attention and resources that human-scale schools and classes provide to raise their levels of achievement
- **Revise content standards.** The California *Content Standards* must have a thoughtful and research-based review that anticipates the future needs of the young people of California. The revised standards have got to be developmentally appropriate, and horizontally and vertically aligned. This review process should be open and transparent.
- **Career Technical Education.** Students should be encouraged to access age appropriate career technical education and counseling systems that recognize the value of both safe work practices and career technical education for all students. Increased funding is needed for new and existing career technical education programs, as is increased recruitment, retention and credentialing of qualified career education instructors with experience in their fields.

Improving Children's Lives Through Universal Preschool

- **Preschool.** An early start is the best predictor of student success. A universal preschool program will ensure that California's children have quality education right from the beginning, replacing the patchwork quilt of public programs that cover barely 15 percent of our more than one million 3- and 4-year-olds. Policymakers need to address professional qualifications and salaries for the workforce serving California's children.



Meeting Fiscal Challenges

- **Balance the state budget.** The California Federation of Teachers believes there are two necessary approaches to the state budget conundrum. The first is progressive tax policies that ask those with the most (the wealthiest top one percent of income earners, people who make more than \$300,000 per year) to pay a bit more, and, second, to close corporate tax loopholes. Polls consistently show that Californians are willing to accept a tax proposal—this progressive option, or a regressive sales tax—rather than borrow or cut. The legislature must enact these reasonable policies to preserve and enhance public education and other social services.
- **Promote tax reform.** Fair tax policies are the financial foundation of a modern society. While property taxes have been the most reliable revenue source for public services, Proposition 13 moved education decision making to the state level and created inequalities between commercial and residential taxes, and within the residential tax structures as well. Federal tax breaks for the rich have meant cuts in federally funded school programs being starved by the massive and growing national deficit.
- **Protect funding and achievement gains.** In 1988 voters passed Proposition 98 to guarantee funding for schools and community colleges. California now ranks near the bottom in K-12 per student spending among the states. Despite the severe fiscal challenges facing California, policymakers must ensure adequate budgets in order to protect the education of California's students, and enhance recent state improvements on national achievement tests and provide a strong foundation for California's future economy.
- **Maintain designated funding for community college part-time salary equity, health benefits and office hours.** Community college instructors need additional state budget dollars to help equalize pay and benefits and to provide office hours for faculty who work part-time. Historical neglect that cannot be corrected overnight means that increases in these line items must be implemented.
- **Support education for adults.** These programs, whether offered in K-12 districts or by community colleges, offer some adults a second chance, and recent immigrants a first chance, at practical education. Yet, in the aftermath of Proposition 13, legislators built a separate funding system based on then-existing inadequate levels. These programs need adequate funding so adults can meet their educational goals.

Keeping Education Work in the Hands of Classified Employees

- **No outsourcing.** Non-teaching personnel contribute to student success, and accountability decreases when institutions cut school staff and outsource services. Research has shown that many contracted out programs enjoy short-term savings at the expense of higher long-term costs. Additionally, outsourcing service disrupts school stability, demoralizes staff, and leaves districts vulnerable to being held financially hostage in later years.
- **Part-time classified.** State budget cuts have often resulted in the cutting back of classified hours, days of service, or even entire positions. At all levels of the public education system, classified employees should be compensated appropriately, and no district administration should be allowed to circumvent payment of health or retirement benefits by continuously employing people just below the threshold necessary for benefits.

Defending Workplace Rights

- **Due process.** Restricting workplace freedoms has a chilling effect on the classroom and on job performance. All education workers have a right to due process in all aspects of their professional lives. Some believe that “the system” prevents bad teachers from being fired. The truth is, if administrators properly document incompetence or other serious problems, any teacher can be terminated. Educational employees, including teachers, should not be treated as if they were at-will employees.
- **Secure employment.** As schools, colleges and universities increasingly rely on part-time workers, no employer should be able to deny security of employment by using the simple device of classifying workers as “temporary” year after year. All community college adjunct faculty should receive equal pay for equal work. The UC has consistently undervalued AFT-represented lecturers and librarians, who are essential to the provision of education at the University of California. The union is presently fighting for equity increases for librarians, who are paid 15-20% less than their peers in the CSU and community college systems. The union also monitors fair enforcement of its contracts, particularly in regard to the issue of employment security and workload for lecturers.
- **Maintain safe and secure schools.** Student achievement suffers when discipline breaks down. Students must face tough, specific consequences for bringing drugs or weapons to school, or assaulting or bullying another student or school employee. School security cannot be compromised, notwithstanding the state’s fiscal challenges.

Health Care

- **Providing affordable health care.** All Californians should have access to quality health care. Paying for rising health care costs impacts school budgets, hampering their ability to deliver quality education. Contract negotiations present challenges as districts struggle with the growing cost of premiums, coping with pressures to shift more costs to employees. The lack of affordable health care for para-educators, part-time faculty and other educators impacts the ability to teach. A lack of available quality healthcare impacts a student’s ability to learn. It is imperative that the state move toward single-payer universal health care coverage, and, meanwhile, enact effective health insurance reform, reduce waste and extend needed coverage to all.

Protecting Teacher and Classified Employee Retirement

- **Protect retirement funds.** Teachers and school staff should not have to worry about whether they will be able to make ends meet after they conclude their years of service. In past years, governors and legislators have sought to use funds from the California State Teachers’ Retirement System and Public Employees’ Retirement System to solve budget shortfalls. Placing our members’ security at risk by disrupting two of the most secure and successful pension programs in the nation by replacing them with defined contribution programs is still a threat. Such changes would drive workers out of education and civil service and undermine educator pensions.

CFT Sponsored Bills

During the second year of this two year session, CFT Lobbyists continue to work on priorities set at Convention. Some bills introduced last year stalled in the process, and will continue this year either under the same bill number, or under a new bill number, sometimes with a new author.

[AB 211 \(Mendoza\) School Classroom Security Locks](#)

Requires new construction school projects submitted to the Division of State Architect to include locks that allow doors to classrooms, and rooms with an occupancy of five or more persons to be locked from the inside.

[AB 1807 \(Fong\) Part-time Faculty Rehire Rights](#)

Requires community college districts to place the names of a temporary faculty employed 67 percent or less on a reemployment preference list. Provides temporary employees on those lists with rights of first refusal to a teaching assignment in his or her faculty service area.

[AB 1862 \(Eng\) CalSTRS Retiree Board Member Election](#)

Changes the retiree representative on the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) Board from one being appointed by the Governor to one being elected by the retired members of CalSTRS.

[AB 1982 \(Ammiano\) Charter School Accountability](#)

When developed, the bill will address the charter school cap, charter school authorizing procedures, and charter school accountability.

[AB 2482 \(Furutani\) Community College Consultation Membership](#)

Requires the Community College Board of Governors to include among the membership of the consultation council two members who are classified school employees, each representing one of two different statewide collective bargaining organizations.

[AB 2584 \(Torlakson\) Evaluation of Personnel Commission Director](#)

When developed, the bill require the personnel commission, in school and community college districts operating under the merit system for classified school employees, to conduct a performance evaluation of the personnel commission director, and authorizes inclusion of classified school employees in that process.

[SB 1209 \(Romero\) Death Benefit Equity](#)

Increases the postretirement death benefit paid to the beneficiary of a classified school member of the California Public Employees' Retirement System from \$2,000 to \$6,163.

[ACR 138 \(Nava\) Faculty and College Excellence Act](#)

Expresses the intent of the Legislature that part-time and temporary faculty receive pay and benefits that are equal to those of specified tenured and tenure-track faculty, and that the California Community Colleges increase the percentage of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Legislative Resolutions Adopted in 2009

[AJR 10 \(Torlakson\) Repeal of Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination](#)

Provision (Resolution Chapter 103, Statutes of 2009)

Requests the President and the Congress to enact the Social Security Fairness Act, which would repeal the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision from the Social Security Act.

[ACR 54 \(Brownley\) Equitable School Funding \(Resolution Chapter 99, Statutes of 2009\)](#)

States the intent of the Legislature that the State of California generate sufficient funds for, and allocate sufficient funds to, education, so as to bring per pupil spending up to or beyond the national average, and to a level that accounts for the actual cost of educating California's diverse pupil population.