

Perspective



Community College Council of the California Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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Filling a Vacuum

Community activist, union officer, computer geek and community college instructor: Cabrillo College's John Govsky does it all.

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Special election section

The special election section details why you must not only vote but volunteer your time to defeat the governor's dangerous proposals.

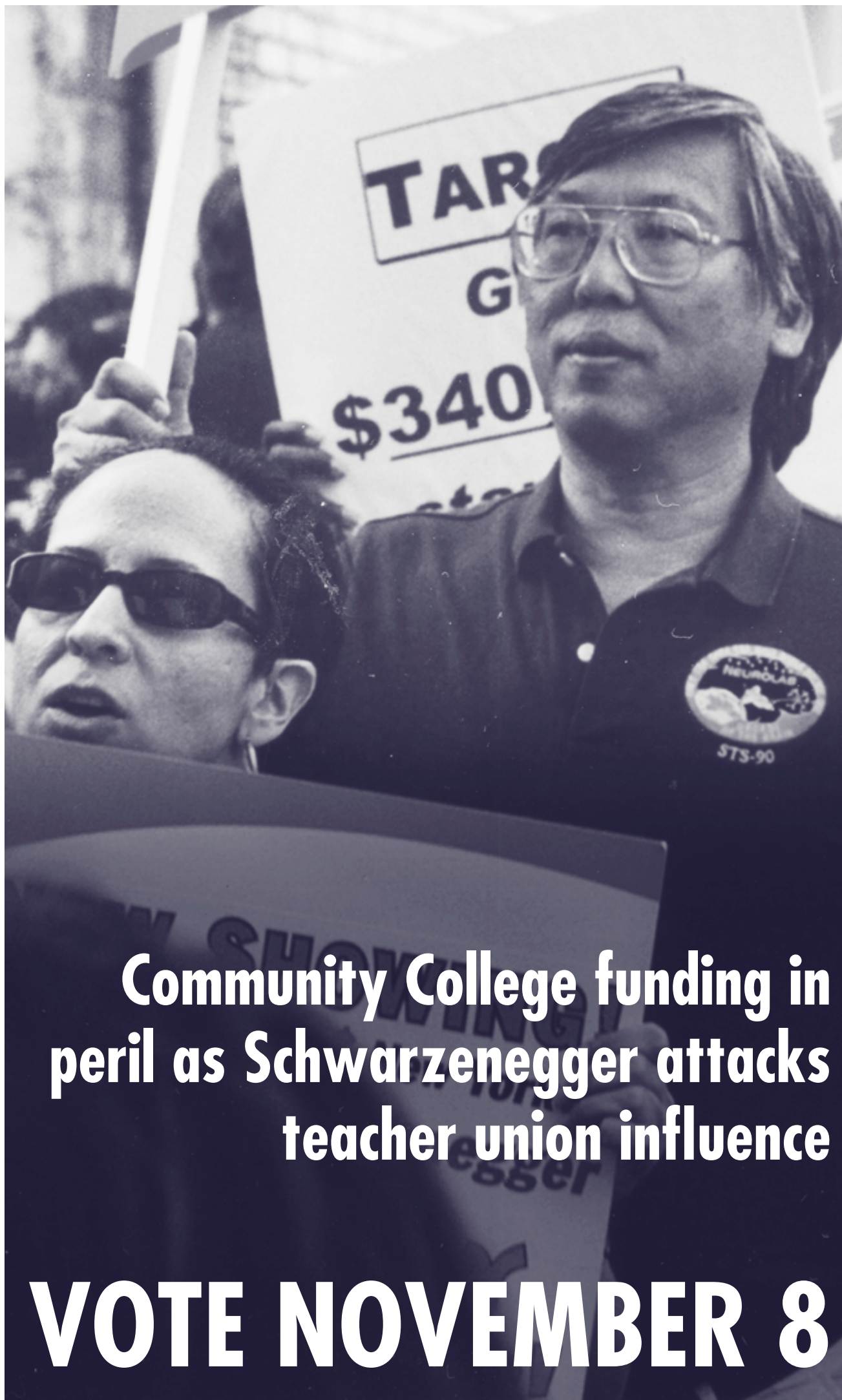
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CFT's Latest Local

Laid back Mendocino is now home to the CFT's newest local.

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JOHN AKANA PHOTO

Community College funding in peril as Schwarzenegger attacks teacher union influence

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Taking the Lead

Marty Hittelman, CFT Community College Council President

The Race to the Bottom

California K-12 and Community Colleges each rank in the bottom ten of the 50 states in per student funding. Student fees are now at an all-time high and as a result thousands of students are not registering at our community colleges. The federal Higher Education Reauthorization Act is heading toward a continuation of a policy of more loans and fewer grants to students in need of financing their educations.

Social services are being cut both nationally and in the states accompanied by a roll back of taxes on the very wealthy. At the same time, the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq are creating a huge national financial deficit while creating windfall profits for the friends of the president and vice president. The late help in the wake of Katrina will make the pressure to cut social services even greater. We have already seen an attempt to cut student financial aid and direct the money toward solving the deficit.

The plan by Grover Norquist and others to “starve the beast” of government by decreasing taxes for the rich while increasing the national debt seems to be integral to the Bush fiscal policy. In California, Governor Schwarzenegger has described his Proposition 76 as a means to “starve the beast.”

But is it healthy to our society to starve government into nonexistence or irrelevance? Is less government good for anyone but the richest among us?

Two more airlines went into bankruptcy this month—on the backs of their employees. Now, after the deregulation of the airline industry, most major airlines have declared bankruptcy. In the aftermath of the deregulation of the energy industry we face another round of gouging by the oil industry with ever rising gasoline prices. The disaster in New Orleans was made worse by the woeful lack of preparation and support by federal, state, and local government.

In the absence of a functioning national health care program, health care costs continue to experience sharp rises while quality care is disappearing in the United States and the medical insurers' profits soar. More people are dying each year as the direct result of going into a hospital. The lack of an adequate minimum wage is driving people into lives of poverty. More and more jobs are being moved out of the country, with the help of our government, in order to increase the profits of the large multi-national corporations and

We need to act now to help stop the further deterioration of our quality of life. Only you can prevent a century of barbarism.

create a race to the bottom in real wages. More and more of the jobs left at home are becoming temporary. Even higher education is eliminating career jobs and replacing them with “as-needed” employment.

In 2001, the Office of Budget Management reported that 45% of the national wealth in the United States was held by one percent of families. In 1929 the percentage was 39%. In 1955—with union membership at its historic peak—the percentage went down to 15%. By the first

Bush administration it had soared back up to 40%. The data is no longer available through the Office of Budget Management but I would suspect that the current level is at an all-time high. The plan is for the rich to inherit the earth.

Proposition 75 on this year's November ballot is designed to defang the public employee unions which fight against those who would destroy effective governmental protections in the areas of public education, health, the environment, working conditions, minimum wage, and worker and consumer rights. It would destroy our ability to fight against those who would destroy all government services. If Proposition 75 were to pass, the only groups left with enough money to launch campaigns and support political campaigns would be the very corporations that we all need protection from.

Proposition 76 is Schwarzenegger's direct approach to starving government. It limits how much can be spent in any given year for programs that benefit all of us, not just the very rich, and would directly cut the funds going to K-12 and community college education by in excess of \$3 billion per year. Proposition 79 would help with prescription drug prices and Proposition 80 would help control energy costs. Six bad propositions and two good ones—can we beat the odds?

Be active in the campaign to defeat the first six propositions on the ballot and approve the last two. We need to act now to help stop the further deterioration of our quality of life. Only you can prevent a century of barbarism.

Perspective

The California Federation of Teachers is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

The CFT represents over 120,000 educational employees working at every level of education in California. The CFT is committed to raising the standards of the profession and to securing the conditions essential to provide the best service to California's students.

President Mary Bergan

Secretary-Treasurer Michael Nye

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL

President Marty Hittelman
Los Angeles College Guild, Local 1521
2550 North Hollywood Way, Ste. 400
Burbank, CA 91505
Email martyhitt@aol.com
Direct inquiries regarding the Community College Council to Marty Hittelman.

Southern Vice President Jim Mahler
AFT Guild, San Diego Community College
Local 1931
3737 Camino Del Rio South, Suite 410
San Diego, CA 92108

Northern Vice President Dean Murakami
Los Rios College Federation of Teachers
AFT Local 2279
1127 - 11th Street, #806
Sacramento, CA 95814

Secretary Donna Nacey
Los Rios College Federation of Teachers,
Local 2279
1127 - 11th Street, #806
Sacramento, CA 95814

Editor Fred Glass
Layout Design Action Collective

EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS
Direct editorial submissions to:
Editor, *Community College Perspective*,
California Federation of Teachers
One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440
Oakland, California 94612
Telephone 510-832-8812
Fax 510-832-5044
Email cfoakland@igc.org
Web www.cft.org

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Mike Nye, Secretary-Treasurer
California Federation of Teachers
2550 North Hollywood Way, Ste. 400
Burbank, CA 91505
Telephone 818-843-8226
Fax 818-843-4662
Email CFTMikeNye@aol.com
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It's not an either/or. Come see us online.

Front page: Dean Murakami (dark shirt) of the Los Rios Community College Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2279, joins with hundreds of other public employees in front of the Sutter Club in Sacramento on Thursday, August 18 to protest another yet another fundraising appearance of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. JON AKANA PHOTO

MARK YOUR 2005 CALENDAR

October 28–29 CFT Executive Council, CFT Office, Burbank

November 8 State Special Election: VOTE!

December 3 Community College Council, Manhattan Beach Marriott

January 6 – 7 CFT Executive Council, CFT Office, Burbank

January 27 Deadline to submit constitutional amendments to CFT Convention

January 28 CFT committee meetings, location TBA in S. CA.

February 10 Deadline to submit resolutions to CFT Convention

Making a Difference

Cabrillo instructor John Govsky fills a vacuum



MAYA BENDOTOFF PHOTO

John Govsky: community college instructor, publisher, and activist.

Adjunct instructors do an amazing variety of jobs to make up for the lack of a full time paycheck. However, perhaps only one California instructor makes his living from cartoons.

Cabrillo College part-timer John Govsky isn't even a cartoonist. He publishes the *Comic News*, a national monthly newspaper that brings together the best in political cartoons, on the hot subjects of the day, from publications around the country. For Govsky, publishing *Comic News* is just the latest development in a long personal history of political activism and wielding the power of the pen.

It started in New Jersey, in the late 1970s, when as a young man he began going to protests against the expansion of two

nuclear plants on the Jersey shore—Salem and Hope Creek. Those were years when thousands of angry environmentalists and community activists surrounded nuclear facilities from Massachusetts to California's Diablo Canyon. They warned of the danger of terrorist attacks on the facilities, of the potential for disastrous leaks in the event of earthquakes and hurricanes (both warning seeming quite prescient today), and exposed the fact that there was no safe method for storing the rapidly accumulating stockpiles of high-

ly radioactive waste the facilities produced.

Yelling in the wind

"Before Three Mile Island, we were pretty much yelling in the wind," Govsky remembers. "Then, in 1979, that all changed. People forget that the anti-nuclear power movement was very successful. No new nuclear plants have been built since then, and even though President Bush wants to reverse that, I don't think he'll get very far."

At the beginning of the 1980s, following the election of President Ronald Reagan, the movement began to change, and Govsky's life did too. As the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union threatened to turn hot, incinerating the planet in a nuclear holocaust, anti-nuclear activists turned their attention from the danger of power plants to the danger of war.

Govsky by that time was living in Santa Cruz, California, devoting his considerable organizing skills to the growing nuclear freeze movement. "Locally, the Lockheed plant was building Trident missile tubes," he remembers, "and the Center for Non-Violence began organizing demonstrations at the gates. The nuclear freeze campaign became my main focus." In 1982, the state's voters passed Proposition 12, which directed the California governor to write to the President demanding a national freeze on nuclear weapons. Santa Cruz became the first of many California cities to declare themselves a "nuclear-free zone."

In the midst of the tumult of the times, Santa Cruzians, never ready to give up fun during more serious pursuits, organized a dance marathon to raise money. It was so successful that

Govsky and his colleagues found themselves debating the wisest use for thousands of dollars collected from tired and sweaty, but politically-committed dancers.

Govsky successfully urged the group to start a newspaper, and the Santa Cruz *Monthly Planet* was born. The city's first alternative weekly, it ultimately lasted

"All of us, part-time or full-time, need more power, and a system of shared governance. That's in the interest of students too—empowered faculty create a better educational environment for them as well."

over 20 years with Govsky at the helm. "We had a reputation as a progressive community before we started it," he says, "but the paper really played an important role in strengthening our movement, and helping to develop the initiatives for which Santa Cruz became well-known." As editor, he interviewed celebrities from Daniel Ellsberg to Helen Caldicott, and the *Monthly Planet* ran news of peace activities from the Trident plant to the Nevada Test Site.

Filling a vacuum

"We filled a vacuum," Govsky explains. "The mainstream press wouldn't carry any news about peace activity. They rolled over and played dead when Reagan

was elected, and they've been that way since. It really made me realize the importance a publication can have in a movement for social change."

However, the *Monthly Planet* had its drawbacks. For most of his career there, Govsky was making \$200 a month, so he began looking for other income. In the late 1980s, personal computers revolutionized the publishing industry. A small newspaper no longer had to take its typewritten copy to a professional typesetter to make up pages. Instead, word-processing and page layout programs enabled editors like Govsky to do the work themselves.

"We got a Mac, using what we'd been paying a typesetter to make the payments on the computer," he recalls. "I got into computing, and then began doing consulting on the side. When the internet came along a few years later, and friends decided to set up cruzio.com, a local progressive internet service provider, I became their first employee because I already had computer skills."

At the same time, Cabrillo College was looking for someone with computer skills to anchor its digital media classes. In 1995, they found Govsky, who's been a mainstay of the visual media department ever since.

"I think students can really relate to him as someone who came into teaching in a non-traditional way," says Debra Bone, president of the Cabrillo College Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4400. "That's the way many of his students have come to school themselves—as people who have already been working

VINCE MEIS PHOTO



Members of the San Francisco Community College Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2121, mustered behind their banner on September 24, during the biggest day of demonstrations against the Iraq war since the invasion. The Local 2121 group marched in the labor contingent in the San Francisco event. While media attention to the AFL-CIO convention in Chicago in July focused on the departure of several unions from the federation, delegates passed an historic resolution calling for "rapid" withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. This is the first time in its history that the AFL-CIO has officially opposed an ongoing war in which the United States is involved.

Govsky continued on page 6

CFT SPECIAL ELECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

"Nix on the first six"

Proposition 73	NO	Puts Teens in Danger
Proposition 74	NO	Punish New Teachers
Proposition 75	NO	Paycheck Deception
Proposition 76	NO	Cuts School Funding
Proposition 77	NO	Redistricting Power Grab
Proposition 78	NO	Corporate Drug Plan
Proposition 79	YES	Consumer Drug Plan
Proposition 80	YES	Affordable Electricity and Blackout Prevention

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

California Federation of Teachers
www.cft.org

Alliance for a Better California
www.betterca.com

No on 75
www.millionairesfor75.com

Info on governor's funding sources
www.arnoldwatch.org

California Labor Federation
www.calaborfed.org

 **VOTE NOVEMBER 8**

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GUEST VILLAIN: Arnold Schwarzenegger

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Governor's dangerous, expensive and unnecessary special election

The stakes are extremely high in Governor Schwarzenegger's expensive (\$45 to \$80 million) special election because after getting elected on a moderate (if somewhat demagogic) platform of non-partisan government reform, he has instead allied himself with President Bush in a concerted effort to privatize and reduce public services. He is attacking unions—and especially singling out education unions—while demonizing public sector workers in line with the decades-long right wing campaign to discredit government.

After promoting a continuously shifting package of proposals since last year, the governor settled on three items as his "reform" package: an assault on teacher employment rights (Proposition 74) a state budget power grab (Proposition 76), and redistricting (Proposition 77). The governor's allies also qualified a dangerous "Paycheck Deception" initiative for the ballot (Proposition 75), a new version of the Proposition 226-style attack (defeated in 1998) that singles out public employee unions in order to silence their voice and prevent their participation in politics. Saying only that he supported Prop 75 "in principle" for months, the governor finally endorsed the measure in late September.

Although his merit pay and pension privatization proposals were so poorly crafted that the

governor was forced to put them on the back burner, they will undoubtedly reappear in a new form soon—especially if Prop 75 passes, and the public employee unions' ability to fight these bad ideas is weakened. Likewise, we'll see a return of his efforts to outsource classified jobs and services to his corporate donor friends. Thus, even as people who believe in the importance of government services such as public education, public health care, and public safety focus especially on defeating Propositions 74, 75, 76, and 77, we can't forget that after November the fight won't be over.

The California Federation of Teachers is working with the Alliance for a Better California to defeat the governor's initiatives and pass pro-worker, pro-consumer protections (Propositions 79 and 80). The Alliance has been pursuing a strategy combining grassroots organizing with paid media advertisements to educate the public about the governor's attacks. These activities will continue until the election. You can get involved in a number of ways. Now's the time.

For more information on the propositions, and on ways to get involved, go to the CFT website, www.cft.org.

NO on 78, YES on 79

In what promises to be the most confusing issue on the special election ballot, there are two competing initiatives that pledge to provide prescription drug discounts.

One—Prop 79—was placed on the ballot by Health Access California, with the support of the CFT, other unions, and consumer and senior groups. It would create a prescription drug discount program that would use the purchasing power of the state of California to leverage discounts from the drug companies. Its goal is to cut soaring prescription drug prices for consumers.

The other—Prop 78—was placed on the ballot by the big pharmaceutical corporations with the specific intent to confuse voters into opposing Prop 79. It would also create a drug discount program, but would allow the drug companies to voluntarily decide whether to participate, and what drugs, if any, for which they would provide discounts.

As of the middle of September, the drug companies have

already raised more than \$80 million to defeat Prop 79 and pass Prop 78. If both measures get a majority, the proposition with the higher vote total will take effect.



Both measures would enable the Department of Health Services to contract with pharmaceutical corporations for a discount on drugs used by Medi-Cal patients. Under each initiative, the state would rebate retailers or pharmacists the amount of the discount. The difference is that under the drug companies' Prop 78, nothing requires the companies to enter

into the contract with the DHS. Under Prop 79, if a company refuses to participate, Medi-Cal will steer patients to other equivalent drugs. This is a significant incentive, since Medi-Cal-reimbursed prescription drug sales topped \$4 billion last year.

Prop 79 would also provide deeper discounts to twice as many Californians than the drug companies' Prop 78. But the biggest difference is that Prop 79 would enforce those discounts, using the purchasing power of the Medi-Cal program.

The drug companies are trying to protect their ability to price-gouge Californians, who now pay a higher retail price for prescription drugs than residents of other wealthy nations. It is precisely this price-gouging and the super-profits by the drug corporations at our expense that allows them to commit \$80 million to try to confuse and defeat us.

Vote NO on Proposition 78. Vote Yes on Proposition 79.

NO 74

Blame Teachers Act

Misnamed the “Put the Kids First” initiative, this measure is unnecessary, unfair, and ineffective. It would increase the length of time a new teacher must spend

on probation from two to five years. It would also allow school districts to terminate ‘tenured’ teachers after two years of poor evaluations.

The governor’s proposal rests on two false assumptions: that

asking new teachers to swallow five years with no employment rights instead of two years will somehow improve public education; and that it’s impossible to get rid of “bad teachers” once they have ‘tenure,’ or permanent employee status.

Today, nearly half of all new teachers quit by their fifth year. We lose these mostly young people due to the difficulty of their jobs and lack of support for new teachers in our severely under-funded public school system, piled on top of their low salaries. What effect do you suppose it will have on our ability to attract and retain good young teachers if, in addition to these challenges, they know that their job security will be based entirely on the

whim of their principal for five long years?

“Tenure” is never mentioned in California law for K-12 teachers (“permanent status” is the term used), and in the public mind it is often confused with academic tenure in higher education. But in K-12, it is hardly a Supreme Court appointment. *It’s simply the right to a hearing before being fired*, during which adequately documented reasons for termination must be presented.

Is this “due process” protection a hurdle to getting teachers fired? Yes, and it should be. We have “tenure” to provide teachers with due process rights that protect them against arbitrary and unreasonable firing, and against the chill on academic freedom that can come with too much

power in the hands of administrators.

California law already provides a system to fire teachers. The Education Code allows teachers to be fired for unsatisfactory performance, unprofessional conduct, criminal acts, dishonesty and conduct unfit for associating with children, no matter how long they have been on the job. That’s why the California School Boards Association—whom we might imagine would support Prop 74—instead opposes it alongside CFT.

Proposition 74 isn’t education reform. It is a vendetta against teachers.

Vote NO on Proposition 74.

NO on PROP 75

Defeat Paycheck Deception!

You can learn a lot about a ballot initiative by finding out who’s backing it. In the case of Proposition 75, its author is Lew Uhler, a right wing leader and anti-union activist. A former officer in the extremist John Birch Society, and currently a supporter of President G.W. Bush’s efforts to privatize Social Security, Uhler hates unions, public education and public employees. So it makes perfect

sense he would propose to cripple the ability of public employee unions to advocate politically on behalf of their members and constituencies.

After months of refusing to state directly whether he supported Prop 75 or not, Governor Schwarzenegger finally announced his support at the Republican state party convention on September 18. This was no big surprise, since the Yes on 75 leadership and fundraisers are

all friends of the governor.

Uhler’s Prop 75 campaign is funded by the deceptively named “Small Business Action Committee,” which has received nearly all its money from large corporations.

Prop 75 would force public employee unions—and only public employee unions—to collect signed statements from each member each year before spending their dues money politically. Uhler claims that he is deeply concerned over the rights of individual union members, who might not agree with how their dues money is spent. Oddly, Uhler doesn’t propose that corporations must receive permission from each shareholder before making political contributions.

In actuality, current law protects workers’ political rights. A union member has the right to opt out of political contributions

What is really at issue is whether workers will have a significant voice in political action. Unions are already outspent by corporations by a more than twenty to one ratio.

at any time by becoming an agency fee payer. What is really at issue is whether workers will have a significant voice in political action. Unions are already outspent by corporations by a more than twenty to one ratio. Prop 75’s reporting requirements

would make that disparity worse, forcing unions to expend huge amounts of time bureaucratically collecting signatures, instead of educating, agitating, and organizing.

Unions are the democratic voice of workers—in the workplace through collective bargaining, and in the legislature and ballot box through political action. If union members don’t agree with the political priorities of their elected leadership, they can elect a new leadership. What Uhler and his corporate friends are after is upending union democracy, substituting the tyranny of a minority of individuals over the will of the majority.

Prop 75 is profoundly anti-democratic. Don’t let the right wing silence workers’ political voice.

Vote NO on Proposition 75.

NO 76

PROTECT SCHOOLS, HEALTH CARE & PUBLIC SAFETY

The so-called “Live Within Our Means” Act is in reality a power grab by Governor Schwarzenegger that would allow him, and future governors, to create and then declare a fiscal emergency, then

slash funding to schools and other vitally needed social services, including police and fire protection, and health care.

It would in essence eliminate Proposition 98’s minimum funding guarantee for public educa-

tion. Under Prop 98, if the state fails to make the minimum payment to schools in a given year, it must restore the missing money in following years, reestablishing that “floor” for future funding. Under Prop 76, catch-up payments would be treated as one time only funding, which could be repaid over fifteen years, and the lower amount paid by the state to public education would become the new funding floor.

Prop 76 would make permanent the governor’s broken

promise and failure to repay the \$2 billion he borrowed from education last year. By reestablishing the floor for education funding at the lower level, this would in turn mean that Prop 76 cuts school funding by more than \$4 billion every year, or \$600 per student. Prop 76 would result in a further plunge in California’s rankings in per-pupil funding, already 42nd in the nation among the states.

Prop 76 is an attack on California’s system of checks and balances. It concentrates too

much power in the hands of just one individual, the governor, without legislative oversight. It would enable any governor to declare a fiscal emergency and cut any program without the approval of the legislature or the people. It would deprive cities and counties of hundreds of millions of dollars needed for local protective services and local health care that serves children and the elderly.

Vote NO on Proposition 76.



Working the Floor

Judith Michaels, CFT Legislative Director

Sacramento in the spin cycle

Arnold Schwarzenegger replaced Gray Davis in 2003, promising Californians action in the tradition of the larger-than-life action heroes he portrays. Instead of adequate funding for education and promised government reform, we have witnessed a re-run of the Wilson years, years that gave us a spike in student fees and little understanding of the need for a professional faculty supported by a cadre of classified employees. Rather than more actions in quicker succession, we need Governor Schwarzenegger to engage in the interaction necessary for the process of democracy.

Any attempt to reform government requires open processes and should focus on public need and realistic solutions to twenty-first century challenges. This governor had the potential to change the atmosphere toward the bipartisan cooperation needed to move toward real solutions. Instead, he engaged in pejorative labeling, widening the gap between the parties, and

now we face a set of flawed proposals, driven by manufactured public opinion that this stubborn governor will be placing before a weary electorate November 8. Weary or not, we must not only go to the polls ourselves, but also urge others to help us turn back this harmful agenda.

The legislature passed few bills during this year of conflict, and even fewer with bipartisan sup-

port. We've engaged in a variety of actions, testifying, writing letters, sending e-mails, walking the halls of the Capitol, and demonstrating. Let's dolly back and focus on some policy items we influenced, with a review of those few community college items that reached the governor's desk.

Keeping us active

The California Performance Review kept us active for months. This appointed commission's massive report contained such gems as eliminating the Community College Board of Governors and transferring its oversight to a new Division of Higher Education within a new Department of Workforce Preparation. This and other unworkable recommendations

did not survive the legislative process.

We participated in action on the budget, which the governor signed essentially on time. Attacks on Proposition 98, which guarantees a level of funding for K-14 education, continued throughout the process; the future of this Constitutional provision remains clouded. Governor Schwarzenegger's community college proposal, besides falling far short of the Board of Governors' submission, included a plan to alter pensions from defined benefit to defined contribution. Moreover, he asked districts to pick up the state contribution of 2% of salaries to the State Teachers Retirement System, shifting this obligation to districts, who could, in turn, negotiate to shift some or all of it to faculty.

The budget gave no additional funding to equalization, non-credit rate enhancement, or professional development. Legislators understood how harmful changes like these would be to our system, our students, and our state; the adopted budget reflected compromise on many of these issues.

Retirement battles

The proposal to change public sector retirement plans caused plenty of reaction, including street demonstrations, revealing a governor who wanted to listen to only some of the people, and a governor's staff that he seemed to have recruited from a latter-day *Amateur Hour* as one flawed proposal after another moved through the legislature.

Legislative Democrats developed a few proposals of their own, but these failed to gain traction with Republicans firmly enthralled with the idea of privatizing pensions, despite little evidence of cost-savings and much evidence of social disruption. The potential for pension reform this year evaporated in June after the governor called for a special election, though work toward compromise continued until the legislature adjourned in September.

The Governor has until October 9 to sign or veto bills. Many bills stalled in the process; in the box is action as of this publication date.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE BILL STATUS

The governor has signed:

AB 982 (Laird) Allows community college districts to charge a health fee to Board of Governors fee-waiver students.

The governor has vetoed:

SB 930 (Ducheny) Would have revised the requirements for the two trustee members of the Community Colleges Board of Governors by requiring that these representatives be appointed by the Governor from a list of names furnished by the statewide association representing community college governing boards.

No action yet on:

AB 256 (De La Torre) Requires PERS to report to the Legislature on the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of creating a single statewide health care pool that would cover all K-14 school employees or a pool which would include all K-14 school employees under Public Employees' Medical and Hospital Care Act, the PERS-administered health care plan.

AB 593 (Frommer) Sponsored by Treasurer Phil Angelides, would establish the California Hope Public Trust to manage California's lands and direct revenues toward helping students and their parents pay for public higher education.

AB 1646 (Assembly Higher Education Committee) Contains various technical, conforming clarifying and minor non-substantive changes to the community college code. Amendments during the final days of the session added authorization for California Community College districts to exempt college students displaced because of Hurricane Katrina from non-resident tuition.

SB 525 (Torklakson), which reduces the one-year waiting period to a period of six months for members of the STRS Defined Benefit Supplemental Program and participants of the STRS Cash Balance Benefit Program before receiving a termination benefit under either program. In addition, the bill prohibits the payment of more than one termination benefit under either program during a single five-year period.

Govsky continued from page 3

for a living, and who now are looking for new skills."

Active in the union

As a part-time faculty member, he also became active in the union at Cabrillo. "It was a slow process," he remembers. "At first, I went to a few meetings. Then we needed someone to fill the position of adjunct chair on our executive board, and I agreed. Finally, I was drafted into negotiations—a very intense experience, really at the center of things."

Bone says she appreciates his political experience. "He's drawn lessons from those years of political activity which are very helpful," she explains. "He helps us focus on organizing the people who support us, but who aren't always very active, rather than wasting time battling with people we'll never win over."

Govsky began to be bothered by the inequity suffered by part-time instructors. "We're the backbone of the system," he says, "the majority of the teaching staff, but we don't get equal pay for the work we do." Cabrillo employs about 350 adjuncts, and 260 full time instructors. "At the same time, all of us, part-time or full-time, need more power, and a system of shared governance. That's in the interest of students too—empowered faculty create a better educational environment for them as well."

After attending a couple of CFT conventions, he saw that

the situation at Cabrillo was really no different than that at other campuses, and realized that adjunct faculty could benefit from networking statewide, sharing experiences and information about contract negotiations and legislative concerns. He was recently elected one of the part-timer representatives of the Community College Council of the California Federation of Teachers.

One of his first forays in his new position was organizing a group of part-timers to meet with John Laird, chair of the State Assembly budget committee. Govsky's history of Santa Cruz activism paid off—he had worked on Laird's first campaign for Santa Cruz City Council years before. Govsky calls Laird "very supportive," but also came away from the meeting with the sobering knowledge that "the state budget is in tatters, so while parity is our goal, we're going to move towards it incrementally."

That's also the approach he's taken in local negotiations. "We were the fourth district statewide to agree on full parity as a goal," he explains. "We're pretty far away, but at least we agree on where we want to go. Now we have to look at a formula or mechanism that can get us there in an incremental way."

Making a living

In the meantime, like other part-timers, Govsky has to make a living with a teaching salary that can't really support him. A longtime friend in Santa Cruz,

Thom Zajac, for years put out a local magazine, the *Santa Cruz Comic News*, providing a mixture of advertising and editorial cartooning. A year ago, the two decided to create a new, national publication, based on the same idea.

The *Comic News* uses editorial cartoons from satirists like Toles and Oliphant, who regularly skewer the powerful over their latest political shenanigans. Next month's *Comic News*, for instance, will be dominated by the political debate swirling around Hurricane Katrina, the terrible flooding of New Orleans, and the biting response by cartoonists to the failure of the federal government to respond. The paper is developing a subscriber base, without advertising, and is about to launch itself on the internet as well, at www.santacruzcomicnews.com.

For Govsky, all these areas of work and politics are part of a larger whole: building a movement for peace and social justice, giving people the skills they need to organize, and laughing and having a good time on the way. "I don't try to inject a political agenda into my computer classes in an inappropriate way," he says, "but I do look at my students, and at young people, and think about what this history means to them. To me, the main thing to instill in people today is that they can make a difference."

By David Bacon



Deborah White, president of the new AFT local in Mendocino, in her math class.

New AFT local at Mendocino College

For the 54 full-time instructors at Mendocino College, the meet-and-confer bargaining arrangement with administrators was increasingly unworkable. It required teachers to explain their problems to district administrators, and propose the changes in salaries and working conditions they thought might resolve them.

The administrators, in turn, would go to the Board of Trustees and present the teachers' demands. "It was like asking the fox to represent the chickens," says Deborah White, a 6-year math instructor.

White eventually got so frustrated she decided to explore other alternatives with her colleagues.

Teachers were angry over being paid 10-15% below the state median. They were dissatisfied with the lack of any binding agreement with the district, and being subject to arbitrary treatment without recourse.

They invited representatives of the California Federation of Teachers, the California Teachers Association and an independent union in nearby Santa Rosa to come answer questions about

the advantages of collective bargaining, and the mechanism for achieving representation.

When the interview process was complete, teachers conducted a straw poll. Sixty percent favored collective bargaining, and the majority wanted the CFT. "We felt it was better-organized, and was more concentrated on the needs of community college faculty," White explains.

By the time the results were in, however, the 2003-2004 academic year was over. In the fall, although White and others wanted to proceed directly to establish a CFT local, other teachers wanted to revisit the decision. They conducted another straw poll, and the CFT again came out ahead. "We assumed that was the final word,

but then it was explained to us that we had to sign cards and make a formal request to bargain," she recalls. "We were real babes in the woods."

The core of union-interested instructors began circulating union authorization cards. The opposition also became more vocal. "The folks who opposed the union, though, were mostly about to retire," White says. "The newer, younger faculty who are replacing them were for the union almost to a person."

The union organizing committee collected 30 cards from the 54 full-time faculty. Those were presented to the Public Employment Relations Board, and a petition was given to the Board of Trustees, asking that the union be recognized and negotiations begin. A Board motion to accept this came without controversy.

Teachers never believed the Board was antagonistic or punitive. Part-time instructors are already represented by another union. "The Board is made up of working people, so they weren't fearful of unions," White adds, "and we went out of our way to be non-threatening. We concentrated on telling them we wanted support and backup, and a legally binding agreement."

The new Mendocino College Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 6322, presented its first bargaining proposal to the board in early October. "Some of the main points we'd like to accomplish," White says, "are maintenance of benefits, a real automatic cost-of-living increase, and two more steps at the end of the salary column, since most instructors are currently stuck there."

The new local is starting a one-on-one member recruitment campaign. Two seats on the Board are also being contested in a November election, and although the union feels it's too new to make endorsements, it is sending a questionnaire to all candidates, and has announced that it will circulate their answers.

White was elected union President mostly, she says, because she was willing to work over the summer on moving the organization forward. Once the bylaws have been approved and a charter granted, they intend to have new elections. "We need new blood," she concludes, "but I've found the union such a positive experience that I actually enjoy going to meetings."

Community College Board approves Budget Change Proposal

The California Community College Board of Governors approved the System's 2006-07 Budget Change Proposal (BCP) for submission to the governor and the legislature on September 12, 2005. The proposed increases above current levels of funding was developed by a budget work group composed of designees of the Consultation Council, other college representatives, and System Office staff. CCC President Marty Hittelman represented the CFT on the working group.

The approved BCP for 2006-07 includes \$774 million in ongoing Proposition 98 funds and \$108 million in one-time funds. Under the proposal, Proposition 98 funding for community colleges would increase from the 2005-06 level of \$5.126 billion to \$5.99 billion. This would represent, if approved by the legislature and signed by the governor, an increase of 14.8 percent. The recommended funding does not include any increase in student fees. The proposal assumes that Proposition 76 on the November ballot will be defeated. If Proposition 76 were to pass, the BCP would be required to be adjusted downward.

The proposed changes include a 3% increase in COLA (\$164

million), a 4% increase in student enrollments (\$210 million), \$80 million in new equalization funds, and \$30 million to increase the rate of noncredit funding.

The CFT Community College Council and other faculty groups pushed to bring the part-time office hours and health insurance (an additional \$9 million) funding in line with the real costs of these programs. The CCC and other faculty groups also initiated proposals to increase funding available for equity in compensation for part-time faculty (\$50 million) and to increase the number of full-time faculty (\$40 million). These items are all in the Board of Governors-approved BCP.

With the passage of Assembly

Bill 1725 in 1988, the State of California went on record as supporting a goal that 75% of the faculty hours performed in the California Community Colleges be by full-time faculty. In the Fall 1988 term, the percentage stood at 63 percent. In Fall 2004, the percentage stood at 62%. During the first few years after the passage of AB 1725, Program Improvement funds were made available to help district hire more full-time faculty. No other such special funds have been provided and the number of full-time faculty has increased only at the same rate as the growth of students. The BCP proposal of \$40 million is calculated to make an improvement of about 2% in the ratio.

The \$50 million for equity compensation for part-time faculty would be the second installment of such funding. The first installment occurred in 2001-02 at a level of \$57 million. This amount was decreased to \$50.8 million in 2002-03 as budgets were cut across-the-board. The \$80 million in equalization

funding would be the third installment of funding intended to equalize the level of per full-time equivalent funding across the state.

"The Budget Change Proposal was a reasonable balance of priorities—faculty equity, COLA, growth, noncredit funding, and equalization," stated Marty Hittelman, President of the Community College Council, at the September 23rd meeting of the Council. "Although some district representatives went to the Board of Governors with a request to increase equalization to \$130 million, the Board wisely, but narrowly, voted to support the advice of Consultation and keep the level at \$80 million. To substantially increase one part of the budget package without looking at the fragile compromise already included in the proposal may have caused a total breakdown in the solid consensus support for the package. It is very important, when possible, to approach the governor and the legislature with a united community college voice."

Local Action

Cerritos

Bargaining hardball is no party

Although community college faculty at Cerritos College voted to join the union over two years ago, they're still fighting for their first contract.

For the five hundred part-time faculty, wages have been the big issue. Cerritos pays far below the salary levels at surrounding districts, and offers no medical benefits. In addition, adjuncts have other issues familiar to colleagues elsewhere: lack of rehiring guarantees, and lack of paid office hours. The three hundred full-time faculty want the security of a written contract covering basic conditions, including a grievance procedure.

To make progress in a first agreement, the union and the district agreed to negotiate a "short form contract," with only a half-dozen articles. Despite that considerable concession by the union, however, the district has refused to sign off without one further demand. District President Noelia Vela wants to change the evaluation procedure for full-time instructors.

In the past, tenured faculty could choose between two evaluation options. A committee consisting only of peer colleagues could evaluate them, or they could choose to add the presence of a college dean. The district wants to make the presence of the dean mandatory.

"This is quite threatening to many faculty," AFT Local 6215 president David Fabish explains. "Teachers fear the potential for hostile evaluations and retaliation, and feel that many deans lack a background, not only in the subject matter being taught, but in instruction itself." One current dean, for instance, was a manager in student services, but has never been an instructor.

By making agreement on this change the condition for agreement on the entire contract, the district is revealing a hostile attitude, according to Fabish. "This is very dismissive and disrespectful of faculty, and in exchange for this requirement, we get nothing. This contract will only cover last year, and we only received 2.5%, which was just slightly more than the cost of living. They really just see us as disposable workers."

This isn't the first attempt by

the district to play hardball over salaries. Not long after the original union election, when the Governor began announcing drastic budget cuts, the Cerritos board proclaimed that employees could expect to see a 1.5% pay cut. The union sent the board president a letter questioning the district's right to announce pay cuts without talking to the union first. The announcement was rescinded.

The district brought in a law firm to back up their bargaining strategy, and the union has now hired its first executive director, Peter Nguyen, to help it bring negotiations to a successful conclusion.

To get the district to move in bargaining, the local union launched a campaign to bombard board members with email messages. Then it began mobilizing faculty to attend board meetings. The district is planning gala celebrations for its 50th anniversary, and angry instructors are likely to show up there to protest too.

"I've worked here for 16 years, and it's hard to feel celebratory. How can we party when we don't even have last year's COLA?" Fabish asks.

Compton

Compton fights accreditation denial

Compton College, which serves some of the poorest and most marginalized communities in the state, has lost its accreditation at a time when its students are most in need of the classes it provides. "Compton serves the underprivileged," says Rodney Murray, faculty president of the Compton College Federation of Employees, AFT Local 3486, and a ten-year veteran teacher of business management. "If young people here didn't have a community college, their situation would be increasingly without hope."

The college serves Compton, Lynwood, Carson and the surrounding communities of south Los Angeles. A majority of their residents are African American and Latino, and since the closure of LA's basic industrial plants over the last three decades, these cities have been some of the most economically depressed in the state. "Gangs and drugs are

all around us, and most students can't afford a 4-year school. Our function at Compton College is to bring people up to where they need to be to enter one. It would be a horrible disservice to our community if the withdrawal of accreditation is allowed to prevail."

Compton was first sanctioned by the state Chancellor during the 2002-2003 school year.

"The state pointed to three major problems," explains philosophy instructor Art Fleming. "There was a fiscal problem – the district had a negative ending balance that year, which is what set off this sequence of events. It also had a weak administration, and a board that alternated between corruption and incompetence."

The Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) investigated and found serious financial irregularities. "Money was spent to no purpose," Murray alleges, "the district was operating in the red, and the financial and business offices were in disarray. Meanwhile Board of Trustee members were given cars, hired their girlfriends, and made irregular expenditures on their credit cards."

In January the district was given a show-cause order and placed in trusteeship, while FCMAT recommended changes that were to take place over an indeterminate period of time. According to Fleming, under these circumstances, a school usually has at least six months to implement the recommendations. Nevertheless, after only four months and ten days, the state withdrew the school's accreditation.

"There was no need for them to do it at that time," Fleming asserts, "and it added severely to the college's problems." Normally the school boasts a student body of 7000. After the first sanction by the Chancellor, it fell to 6000, and after losing accreditation, to 5000. "This seriously undermines our fiscal stability," he adds. "The accreditation

committee itself was contributing to our problem." Murray accuses the committee of violating its own rules and guidelines, and notes that the president of Long Beach College is a member. "She had a clear conflict of interest, since they would get students who decided not to go to Compton."

Nevertheless, the Compton community has rallied to the defense of the schools. Teachers, classified employees and community leaders formed the Committee to Save Compton Community College. Because of the board's corruption and incompetence, they resolved to change its members. In the coming November 8 election, the committee is campaigning against current board member Carl Robinson, and has endorsed candidate Sharon Young.

Los Angeles

New contract ratified

Faculty in the nation's largest community college district have negotiated and ratified a new contract, with substantial improvements for both full- and part-time faculty. Carl Friedlander, president of the Los Angeles Community College Guild, AFT Local 1521, called it "probably the most successful set of negotiations we've ever had." The agreement covers 4500 instructors on the nine campuses of the Los Angeles Community College District, including 1700 full-time teachers and 2800 part-timers.

The high point of the agreement is a 5.2% salary increase for the current school year, made up of a 4.2% cost of living increase with a 1% raise on top of that. For senior faculty, the set of longevity steps was also augmented. In addition to the last step for adjunct faculty, for instance, formerly at 8 years, a new ninth year step carries an additional 3.9% salary boost.

Part-time faculty benefited in other ways. For the first time, the district will contribute to their healthcare. Any instructor carrying a one-third load or more will receive \$150 per month towards premiums on any of three plans the district offers. Next year the district will offer optional payments into Social Security for adjunct faculty. Currently adjuncts can receive payments to STRS or a cash balance, but older instructors who already have built up equity in the Social Security system might benefit more from the new option.

"We made numerous other Los Angeles-specific improvements for adjuncts," Friedlander explains. "That includes a new set of pay principles, which specify the compensation adjuncts should receive for activities including curriculum development, shared governance, accreditation committees, grant writing, test coordination, textbook choice, advising student organizations, and editing departmental newspapers. This compensation is outside the 60% salary limit for adjuncts."

In other sections of the contract, new language specifies the role of the union in education planning committees and other areas of shared governance. A new pay system for coaches itemizes the stipend paid for each sport. The union won additional release time equivalent to one full time position.

Fourteen faculty members, led by Don Sparks, participated on the union negotiating team. It included one from each college, an additional part-time representative, a counselor, an Academic Senate liaison and the local's vice-president. Friedlander noted that the district was very open about its financial condition, and district chancellor Rocky Young not only allowed complete access to all information, but gave the union the opportunity to respond to inaccuracies in financial projections, and correct them.

By David Bacon



Members of the AFT Local 1521 negotiations team faced off in collective bargaining with Los Angeles Community College District management and did well for the membership.