

## TEACHERS FIGHT FOR SCHOOL FUNDING

**A**nother state budget proposes to continue inadequate education funding. When will lawmakers get the courage to implement the will of the people of California and dramatically increase education funding? Adequately funding education is the best investment we can make in our children's future and in the future of California. The voters know that, and most recently expressed their desire to protect education funding by defeating the governor's Proposition 76, which suspended school funding guarantees and would have allowed the governor to ignore past debts owed to California schools.

According to a 2006 *Education Week* report "Quality Counts," California schools receive \$7,552 per pupil, which is several thousand dollars less than the average of the top 10 states. California, currently 43rd in per pupil funding, continues to sink below the national average. Our goal should not be "average" funding, but excellent funding, adequate to support excellent education.

Far from reaching for funding excellence, the governor's proposed budget for 2006-07 does not even provide California schools with the minimum funding required by law. The governor also ignores the \$3.2 billion debt owed to California schools for prior years' funding shortfalls. That's \$12,875 for every

classroom in California. This money is desperately needed to restore class size reduction programs, to buy up-to-date textbooks, to mentor new and veteran teachers in need of assistance, and to attract and retain high quality teachers. It looks as if we'll spend another year fighting over peanuts while students pay the price. Meanwhile, the governor projects a \$5 billion-plus state surplus. The debt to education could be paid from that reserve.

The governor also is proposing to fund Proposition 49, his after-school initiative, out of Proposition 98 funding. Reducing the already-insufficient school day funding to start funding after-school programs is foolish. After-school programs are valuable and important. But robbing from the classroom to invest in support after the school day robs Peter to pay Paul.

The governor made a commitment during the Proposition 49 campaign that it would not take money away from the existing school budget. CFT has called on the governor to meet that commitment.

CFT has identified billions of dollars in corporate loopholes and lost revenues that could boost education funding. The only thing standing between our students and the funding they need and deserve is a lack of political will.



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### **A hole in the governor's moderate makeover disguise**

#### *The UC Labor Centers*

**T**hroughout the succession of chameleon-like political makeovers of Governor Schwarzenegger, one plan has remained constant. In order to please a hard-right think tank, the Pacific Research Institute, the Governor has eliminated, for the third year running, all of the funding for a small research and education program that resides at UCLA and UC Berkeley.

The two institutes have existed for more than fifty years as the only labor-oriented research functions

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ACADEMIC FREEDOM FIGHT

*Right-wing intimidation campaign resembles McCarthyism; College Republicans, ultraconservatives smear liberal professors*

For anyone who's seen the movie, *Good Night and Good Luck*, about Senator Joe McCarthy's Cold War attack campaign, recent events at UCLA and Santa Rosa Community College have an eerie déjà vu quality. A conservative group offered \$100 cash bounties to UCLA students who would videotape the group's so-called "Dirty Thirty" professors saying liberal things during classes. The group, masquerading as an alumni association, was found to have no members. The UCLA Chancellor called the tactics "reprehensible."

At Santa Rosa Community College last year, ten instructors found their office doors posted with flyers featuring a bright red star and a reference to a McCarthy-era Education Code section prohibiting "teaching Communism." The Santa Rosa Junior College Republicans claimed credit for the attack posters.

In neither case had any student utilized the existing campus complaint procedures to object to any of the targeted faculty.

"This group has no idea what any of us do in the classroom," said lecturer Katherine King, who was on the conservative UCLA blacklist. "We are being attacked for participating in the political life of the campus, city, state and nation—which all citizens should do. We teach critical thinking about the facts we present in class. We must preserve such critical thinking, as well as active participation in the political process. Our democracy depends on it.

"Academic freedom is the heart of higher education and research. Faculty and students have to be free to pursue truth no matter where truth leads them. Without the protection of this type of academic freedom, there can be very little research or teaching," said King.

*The character assassination and intimidation campaign can have a chilling effect on anyone who teaches. Most faculty don't have tenure, so they enjoy no job security or academic freedom protections.*

The character assassination and intimidation campaign can have a chilling effect on anyone who teaches. Most faculty don't have tenure, so they enjoy no job security or academic freedom protection. Making up sensational, overblown and outright false stories of overbearing professors and violated student rights is a way to smother the rights of targeted teachers. Offering cash bounties is an invitation to disgruntled students to file false reports. Though the \$100 bounty,

after threat of legal action, was rescinded, such tactics can result in students being deprived of a range of points of view.

The University Council-AFT helped organize a UCLA "teach-in" to present the case for academic freedom. CFT, which represents both UC lecturers and community college faculty, is working to ensure the rights of the academic professionals under attack, and to defend the rights of students to a quality public education free of fear and intimidation.

Read more news articles and background about the attack on academic freedom:

<http://www.cft.org/councils/uc/uclareljan06.html>



**2006 CFT Convention**

The annual California Federation of Teachers convention, the highest decision-making body of the statewide organization, will be held this year March 24-26 at the Sheraton Grand, Sacramento.

Speakers at the Convention will include Ed McElroy, National AFT President, Congressman George Miller, and Jinny Sims, President of the British Columbia Teachers Federation.

The convention rally, to be held at the state capitol, will feature Phil Angelides.

For more information, or to confirm your attendance, contact Steve Hopcraft at 916/457-5546. Also, cft.org will have up-to-date conference details as the convention approaches.

*This year's theme:*  
**Students are our Special Interest**

## New community college ballot initiative restores promise

By Dennis Smith, CFT vice-president and president, FACCC

California's community colleges educate more students than the University of California and the California State University combined; yet they fight for recognition and resources. Community college funding is included within Prop. 98. Yet Prop. 98 funding is tied solely to K-12 enrollment. And while enrollment in K-12 education is projected to decrease over the coming decades, community college enrollment is projected to increase. That does not allow for resources sufficient to serve California's community college students.

That's why the CFT has endorsed and committed resources to support a community college ballot proposition planned for the November, 2006 election. The three-part "Community College Governance, Funding Stabilization, and Student Fee Reduction Act" addresses the impending community college funding crisis, firmly establishes a clear, independent governance structure, and reduces student fees to \$20 per unit while restricting and capping future increases. The initiative will help place control of issues critical to community colleges, students, and faculty in the right hands.

A coalition known as "Californians for Community Colleges"—including the CFT, the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), the Community College League of California, (Trustees and CEOs), and the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild—finalized the measure's language, which is currently undergoing legal review by the California Attorney General's office prior to circulation. Approximately 600,000 qualified signatures will have to be submitted by April 30, 2006 to put the initiative on the November ballot.

The initiative protects community college funding without harming K-12 system funding by modifying the existing constitutional enrollment growth formula to allow either segment to trigger increases in overall Proposition 98 funds. Those new funds would flow to each segment based on its own enrollment changes.

Unless this initiative is passed, overall Proposition 98 funds are projected to decrease, due to a projected decline in the rate of K-12 growth over the next ten years, while community college funding

needs are expected to increase. Without passage of the measure, community college funding will be insufficient within two to three years to pay for additional enrollment growth, and probably cost-of-living adjustments as well.

The initiative will strengthen community college system governance. Currently the CSU, UC, and K-12 public education systems are constitutionally recognized by the state; the community college system is not. This measure will remedy that inequity through constitutional recognition of a bilateral governance structure of autonomous local community college districts coordinated at the policy level by an adequately funded and independently staffed system board. At the same time, the governance authorities and responsibilities of locally elected governing boards will be preserved. The measure will also add an additional faculty member to the board of governors.

Lastly, the initiative helps to keep California's promise of affordable access to higher education by reducing student fees to \$20 per unit. The CFT and the other faculty organizations in the coalition would prefer to see no student fees; this reduction is a move in the right direction.

Studies of past fee increases and the resulting effects on student enrollment found that for every \$1 fee increase, nearly 100,000 students are turned away from community colleges. After recent increases in student costs from \$11 to \$26 per unit since 2003, 150,000 students who were expected to enroll did not show up. Students, especially low-income students, simply are unable to meet rising student costs. That will harm all of us in the future, because those students would become more skilled and more productive.

This initiative would enable the community colleges to meet projected enrollment growth, and ensure that all Californians can access some form of higher education.



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## Teacher retention: we know what works

According to a recent report, California is outperforming most other states in new teacher retention—but we have a long way to go. Thanks to programs put in place in the 1990s that strengthened on the job support for new teachers and boosted their beginning pay, California increased its retention rate. As of 1999, the state was losing around 25% of new teachers by the fifth year of teaching. While still too high, that figure compares with over 40% of new teachers dropping out by year five earlier in the decade.

“You can’t expect bright young teachers to stick around without proper levels of support,” says CFT president Mary Bergan. “We know what works. We’ve always said a successful school environment needs competent leadership and a cadre of veteran teachers with the time to offer help. In schools with strong professional development programs like Beginning Teachers Support and Assessment (BTSA) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), the retention rate is substantially higher than in schools without them. And of course decent beginning salaries don’t hurt.”

According to “Retention of New Teachers in California,” (Public Policy Institute of California, February 2003), improving starting teacher salaries by \$4,400 per year in the 1990s resulted in increasing teacher retention by 17%. But at the same time, effective implementation of BTSA reaped an even higher increase in retention rate of 26%, and at a lower cost: just \$3,370 per participant.

Another way of looking at the same picture: between 1993 and 1999, thanks to a state commitment to professional development and higher compensation,

new teacher turnover fell from 8% per year to 5%.

The report points out that while BTSA has been maintained, PAR funding has been slashed (from \$222 million in 2001-2002 to \$27 million in 2004-2005). Last year what remains of PAR was folded into block grants to districts, and remains there in the governor’s new budget proposal.

Another recent report, “The Status of the Teaching Profession 2005,” (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning) found that under-prepared teachers are generally more heavily concentrated in low-performing schools, which usually happen to be high-poverty schools as well. Higher percentages of interns and teachers without full credentials tend to teach in more difficult school environments. This report, similar to the PPIC’s, argues that to properly deal with maldistribution we need to increase our commitment to professional development and higher salaries for new and veteran teachers.

“Retention is especially hard in low-performing schools,” notes Bergan. “But reversing the problems of high teacher turnover and the maldistribution of teachers can be addressed with the tools we have. We just need to make them a greater priority. That’s why we’re working with Senator Jack Scott on legislation to recommit the state to moving in this direction.”

“Retention of New Teachers in California” can be found online at [www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org).

“The Status of the Teaching Profession 2005” is at [www.cft.org](http://www.cft.org).



### CFT BACKS PRESCHOOL FOR ALL INITIATIVE

The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) has endorsed Proposition 82, the Preschool for All Act. CFT represents thousands of preschool educators, and has long supported universal early childhood education. The initiative:

- establishes free, part-day preschool for all California children whose parents choose to enroll them in the year before kindergarten;
- asks the wealthiest .6% of Californians to invest in our young children by increasing their tax liabilities by 1.7% on taxable income over \$800,000 for couples filing jointly or \$400,000 for individuals;
- ensures state-level authority and local flexibility;
- puts well-trained teachers and aides in every preschool classroom; and
- assures the public’s right to know its investment is achieving good results for kids.

The initiative creates a process for developing the professional work force that is required to meet

these goals. It also identifies a funding source to support the creation of a universal, voluntary and free preschool system.

Existing preschool programs, (public, private, centers, family child care, etc.) will have to be brought into the new system’s funding, administration and quality enhancement.

The CFT will focus attention on the professional preparation of the early childhood workforce. Experienced early childhood staff will be given assistance to secure credentials specific to teaching young children.

CFT will work for passage, and then on enabling legislation addressing these issues.

The initiative, once passed, will change the landscape of early childhood education in California and move the state in the direction of fully preparing preschoolers for school success.

## Bond proposal: Do it right

No one can disagree that revamping California's infrastructure is long overdue. Nor is the scale of the governor's proposals—to float \$68 billion in general obligation bonds to pay for a \$222 billion renovation—out of line with the need to bring the state's aging systems into the twenty-first century.

“The question is whether this is the right time and the right way,” argues CFT president Mary Bergan. “If anything, the governor's proposal understates the problems we face. But we need to be honest about what bonds cost. They represent another form of borrowing, something this governor claimed was part of the problem when he came into office. Now he wants to make it the center of his solution.”

There is an alternative. The minority caucus in the California state legislature has refused to consider any tax increases for years. They've managed to convince the governor that he can't propose any tax increases, either. Worse, they even spurn restoring taxes that in recent years have been rescinded. The tax on the top income brackets implemented by Pete Wilson to deal with state budget problems in the early 90s expired in 2000.

While the Republicans present this anti-tax position as some kind of sacred principle that they defend

### *The UC Labor Centers* (From Page 1)

in a university system with business departments and business-oriented research institutes that dwarf them. Recent publications by scholars associated with the Centers include studies of the impact of minimum wage increases on local economies and the decline of job-based health insurance coverage.

In a budget proposal that would increase funding to the UC system by more than two hundred and forty nine million dollars (a bump upwards of 5.2%), the proposal to pull the plug on the Centers for Labor Research and Education (a three million dollar cut) makes no financial sense. No other UC research program has been targeted for deep cuts, let alone elimination.

Which is why CFT President Mary Bergan asserts, “The purpose of this act is purely political.” This is an inconsistent move by the governor, to say the least. Immediately after his failed special election, the Governor executed a quick about-face on several issues, signaling his apparent return to a moderate stance from the conservative-from-hell position he occupied through most of 2005. He retreated on the nurse-staffing ratio issue that had launched the union campaign against him. He gave up on his effort to eliminate mandatory lunch breaks for workers in the private sector. He hired a putative Democrat as chief-of-staff. He proposed

along with Mom and apple pie, it is in fact something rather more prosaic: part of the conservative political strategy to starve government by de-funding it. We saw recently in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina what the effects of this anti-government ideology really are: pain and suffering for people who need help but find it's no longer there.



The richest Californians, like the largest corporations, can afford to pay more in taxes. Indeed, what with Bush's federal tax cuts, ponying up a modest increase in state taxes would only represent a smaller overall tax cut for the people who can afford it. It will allow them to contribute to their community to improve public health care, public education, and public safety.

Surveys consistently show that the voting public supports appropriate tax increases that are targeted to specific needs like education and health care. It's time the intransigent minority dropped their knee-jerk opposition to any and all tax increases. We all agree it's time to fix the state's aging infrastructure. We should also agree to do it the old-fashioned way: pay as we go, or at least use a realistic mix of taxes and bonds, rather than saddling our children and grandchildren with the entire bill.



freezing student fees in the state universities, and signaled his willingness to sign a minimum wage increase. He has not resurrected his efforts to privatize public pension funds or public education support jobs.

Yet in January, the Labor Centers, without fanfare, were given the heave ho. “Maybe he thinks it's below the radar,” conjectures CFT president Mary Bergan. “He's trying to maintain some connection with his right wing base, while not doing it in a high-profile manner that conflicts with the moderate image he's trying to project in order to get himself re-elected. But this action is not below our radar, and we're going to do everything we can to restore the Labor Centers' funding.”

Bergan is a vice-president of the California Labor Federation. She indicated that unions will continue to exert pressure on the legislature and the governor's office to save the only UC program that serves the research needs of workers. “We can hope that wide exposure of this conservative attack will remind people of the governor's continuing anti-worker, anti-union mindset,” said Bergan. “Perhaps outing the contradiction between this action and Schwarzenegger's current moderate politics will help him to rethink this outrageously partisan budget cut.”

California Federation of Teachers  
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO  
One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440 Oakland, CA 94612



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*Mary Bergan, President, California Federation of Teachers*



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**California Federation  
of Teachers**

**Mary Bergan, President**

**Communications Director**

Fred Glass

Cell Phone: (510) 579-3343

**CFT Headquarters**

One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440

Oakland, CA 94612

Phone: (510) 832-8812

Fax: (510) 832-5044

**Media Relations**

Steve Hopcraft

Hopcraft Communications

3551 N Street

Sacramento, CA 95816

Phone: (916) 457-5546

Fax: (916) 457-5548