

Questions and Answers

Q: What is the Caravan for Kids?

A: PTA members all over California are protesting the Governor's proposed education budget by joining a Caravan for Kids on April 27 to travel to Sacramento and rally at the Capitol the following day. Parents are mobilizing as never before because there has never been a more important time to give our children a voice in Sacramento.

Q: Why is the PTA opposing the Governor's proposed budget for education?

A: The simple fact is the Governor's proposed education budget does not provide adequate funding for our schools. According to a recent Rand Corporation report, California's public education system, has fallen from a national leader 30 years ago to its current ranking near the bottom in nearly every objective category. For 10 years now California has spent "well below" the national average per student. As a result California has some of the most overcrowded classrooms, and the lowest number of librarians and counselors per student in the nation. Many schools lack basic supplies and instructional materials, and nearly one of every 10 students in California attends a school with no nurse on staff.

In the last 4 years California schools have suffered more than \$9.8 billion in cuts. And this budget proposes to cut even more. There is no more to cut. Schools have already suffered 30 years of steady cuts. Class sizes are increasing. Teachers, school nurses, librarians, and counselors are being let go. Basic learning materials are unavailable.

Our kids deserve far better than this, and the future of our state deserves better than this.

Q: Doesn't this budget actually increase funding to schools?

A: No. The Governor's proposed budget actually results in net revenue losses for schools and additional cuts. That is because the proposed increase provided in this budget is less than half the cost of living increase facing districts statewide. In addition, this budget tries to force new costs onto local school districts – the pensions for state employees – that had been previously paid for by the state. The Governor's proposed education budget would force virtually every school district in the state into a budget *deficit*.

But what we find most costly is the broken promise. Last year the Governor cut \$2 billion from education funding, with the promise that he would restore that funding this year. Just one year ago, he promised that this year he would support and fully fund education as called for by Proposition 98, a voter-approved Constitutional measure that was intended to guarantee schools *minimum* funding and protect school children from further harmful cuts. Now he wants to break that promise by not only refusing to restore last year's \$2 billion, but by decimating most of the protections ensured by Proposition 98.

Q: If education funding is increased won't health care or welfare need to be cut?

A: This is a false argument, and a cynical attempt to divide Californians and pit one group against the other to advance a budgetary agenda. Valuing and protecting the education of our children is a critically important priority, period. Californians are in agreement on this. That's why recent polls show that Californians believe that education funding should be a top priority. Health and welfare programs are important, too, and it is the Governor's and Legislature's job to find the means to adequately fund them as well.

Q: The Governor has said that the State can't afford Proposition 98.

A: The truth is that we can't afford *not* to have Proposition 98. Proposition 98 was affirmed by the voters to guarantee in the state constitution a minimum level of funding for our schools. The funding levels for schools under Prop 98 were never meant to be optimal. They were the absolute *minimum* funding level, below which schools would likely fail. But this proposed budget cuts education funding below those minimal levels.

Californians understand that our children's education is everyone's business. They understand that the state's economy and its future depend upon our children being educated well. That's why the voters of California support Proposition 98. California's students need Proposition 98. It is part of our state Constitution. And the Governor of California should uphold Proposition 98.

Q: Aren't "special interests" leading the charge against this budget?

A: It is appalling that this Governor and his staff have labeled parents a "special interest." The California Parent Teacher Association is a volunteer network of concerned parents and families throughout the state who donate millions of volunteer hours and dollars each year to provide basic supplies and services to schools that instead should be provided by the State. PTA members do have one special interest, though: Advocating for the educational quality of a generation school children. Our only interest is in our children's welfare.

Q: What is PTA asking for?

We are calling on the Governor and the Legislature to do two things:

1. Keep the promise made last year and restore and affirm all of the provisions included in Proposition 98; delete the provision shifting state education costs to local school districts; and include a cost of living increase that reflects the *real* costs facing schools today; and
2. Make a commitment to our children's future by developing and supporting a plan to ensure that student achievement and per pupil funding in California schools shall place among the top ten states in our nation again by 2015. Let's make California schools great again.