

Higher Ed. union prepares for first statewide strike



At a March 28th news conference on the Sacramento State University campus, Kevin Wehr, a CSUS sociology professor and CFA bargaining chair, highlights the fact-finding report's call on management to meet the union's five percent contract salary demand and authorize a study of how to make CSUS faculty salaries more competitive (above).

Supported by a fact-finding report that slams the California State University chancellor and management team for not making students and faculty the top priority, members of the California Faculty Association and supporters are preparing for the system's first statewide strike. The concerted action, set for April 13-19, would represent the largest higher education strike in the country. More than 200 faculty, students, and supporters rallied on the Capitol steps on March 30 at the start of a daylong lobbying effort to increase legislative pressure on the university to give CFA a fair contract (below).



During the March 20 rally, legendary organizer Eliseo Medina, who worked with Cesar Chavez and United Farm Workers of America, reminds the crowd of the late labor leader's advice – never give up and everything is possible. He is flanked by Assembly Member Jose Medina, chair of the Assembly's Higher Education Committee.

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UTLA members win in "Fund the Fight" campaign

UTLA officers and House of Representatives designed a strategic plan that would include organizing for action in eight areas: Contract & Benefits, Shaping Local Control Accountability Plans, Public School Accountability & Sustainability, Charter School Organizing, Building A Successful School Model, School Site Empowerment-Contract Enforcement-Member Rights & Working Conditions, Electoral Politics Legislation & Social Issues and Building A Stronger UTLA.

To meet the goals of the strategic plan, UTLA leaders determined that a \$19 a month increase in dues, the pass through of future affiliate dues increases and decreases, and joint full membership in CFT/AFT and CTA/NEA would be required.

The union saw the new resources as an investment in the UTLA Strategic Plan that would erase their structural deficit, expand legal services, create a public relations campaign to counter anti-educator messages, provide school

site support, underwrite strategic research, and facilitate parent/community engagement.

To educate members and gain their support, UTLA Officers, Chapter Chairs and Staff promoted the strategic plan and the need for the dues increase and other resources through a campaign called "Build the Future and Fund the Fight." The campaign consisted of site visits to all schools coupled with phone banking and cluster meetings. Members were asked to sign a petition stating their support of the plan and their commitment to vote "yes" when ballots were sent. For eight weeks in November to December, CTA provided staff to assist UTLA in meeting the goal of reaching every member. The campaign began at the start of the school year and ran through January with ballots sent out at the end of January with a ten-day return period.

(See UTLA, Page 2)

— **Partners in Advocacy** —
CTA staff and members working for California's students

LVEA saves non-reelected 'very good teachers'

January and February bring one of the hardest times in our collective advocacy for our members- NON-REELECT SEASON.

Typically, our members are told they won't be coming back because they're, "not a good fit." The conversations run from tears over the disappointment to anger over poor communication (or none at all) from the administrator.

This is usually the case for the Las Virgenes Educators Association, but last spring, the LVEA president saw something he hadn't in the past. "We felt these three teachers had the potential to be very successful in our district. The principal communicated poorly to her probationary teachers (and others) and I think the district realized that. The key was getting the district to reconsider its decision," says Craig Hochhaus, president of LVEA.

Hochhaus and his local leaders took a different tact than they had in the past, "Along with site association leadership and department chairs, we established an association-sponsored



LVEA President Craig Hochhaus, right, With CTA President Eric Heins.

improvement plan for each of them. We visited each of their classrooms four times over the next two months and asked site and district administration to do the same. We wanted administration to see that these three teachers would incorporate their plan and improve their teaching abilities. We figured we had a less than 5% chance of getting them re-elected; however, we also knew that it was an investment in our colleagues. Worst case scenario,

they'd be more effective in their next job in a new school district."

Hochhaus and the site reps took a little extra time and did classroom visits for all three teachers. They recognized good teaching practices, great connections with kids, and good classroom control. They started to advocate at the district level to reconsider their decisions. They encouraged administration to go see the teachers in action.

To make a long (four months) story short- they were able to get two of the three teachers' non-reelects overturned. These two members are now permanent and working in the district! What was the key to victory? Hochhaus says:

"1. Gained administration's trust that we were truly looking out for the district and our students.

"2. Got administration to realize that we'd respect their decision if they'd simply visit their classrooms and consider rescinding their non-reelection decision.

"3. These were very good teachers!"

UTLA: 81% of voters support increase

(Continued from Page 1)

All of the hard work done for the "Build the Future and Fund the Fight" campaign paid off; 16,000 members voted, with 13,000 voting

in favor, an 81% "yes".

This result showed UTLA's strength and the members' commitment to organize for action and fulfill

the goals of the strategic plan. CSO stands in support of UTLA and will work with them as they organize and move forward.



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What's there to like about ESSA?

Congress reauthorizes the ESEA

The 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) replaces the flawed "No Child Left Behind." Among other things, it reduces the amount of standardized testing and ensures that educators' voices are part of decision-making at federal, state and local levels.

On December 10, 2015, educators across the country breathed a collective sigh of relief when President Barack Obama signed the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The ESSA builds upon the critical work states and local educational agencies (LEAs) have implemented over the last few years, but what is there to like really in the new law?

The year was 2002 and then president George W. Bush, who famously uttered the question, "Is our children learning?" was eager to prove that he could live up to his promise of being the "Education President." Politicians were eager for more "accountability" in the classroom. Bush took the lead and helped to shape what would become, No Child Left Behind—the reauthorization of the ESEA. NCLB required standardized testing of students and a system of penalties for schools whose students scored below benchmarks chosen to demonstrate proficiency. Teachers felt they spent too much valuable time teaching to the tests and schools were stuck in no man's land as they stretched to reach their required AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress).

Newly elected president Barack Obama tried to ditch NCLB when the ESEA came up for renewal in 2008, but he lacked the necessary



Congressional votes. By December 2015, there was broad bi-partisan support—something unheard of in this era of obstruction and government shutdowns.

Senator Lamar Alexander, a key architect of the new law believes the role of the Federal Government will be very different from what it was under NCLB. He says, "What I believe is that when we take the handcuffs off, we'll unleash a whole flood of innovation and ingenuity classroom by classroom, state by state, that will benefit children." Pleased with the reauthorization, President Obama said that President George W. Bush, had good intentions, but it "often forced schools and school districts into cookie-cutter reforms that didn't always produce the kinds of results that we wanted to see. He went on to say that the new law "creates real partnerships between the states, which will

CSO holds annual meeting in Redondo

CSO held its Annual Meeting on April 2nd and 3rd in Redondo Beach, California. The Annual Meeting brings together CSO staff working within all four regions and different departments. The purpose of the Annual Meeting is to provide CSO members the opportunity to do the business of CSO. Members submit

have new flexibility to tailor their improvement plans, and the federal government, which will have the oversight to make sure that the plans are sound."

More About ESSA

- While testing is still required in grades 3-8 and once in high school, states must revamp their accountability and can greatly scale back the testing component previously driving teaching.
- Districts still have to reform low performing schools, but they get to choose the interventions that are implemented—schools with students who are historically disenfranchised must be flagged.
- Districts can eliminate evaluations based on student test scores.
- States are required to adopt challenging standards, but they can choose to move away from Common Core State Standards.
- States will have to measure English language proficiency.
- There will be more flexibility for use of Title I funds.
- Educators will have a voice in decision making at the local, State and Federal levels.
- Requires multiple measurements of student success in elementary, middle and high school.
- Incentivizes supports and interventions tailored to local needs.

NBIs to implement new programs, change bylaws, and provide direction for CSO leadership. It is also an opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues and mixing in some fun with the work. Check out the CSO Facebook page for highlights of the week-end.