



GTA Advocate



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Glendale Teachers Association

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President's Message Health Benefits Cap

By Tami Carlson

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I want to thank all of you who returned their surveys to the GTA. We received many more responses on this issue than we ever have on any other. The vast majority of membership replied and surveys are still coming in.

We have heard you loud and clear; **No Cap!**

Now our work really begins.

We have negotiated fairly with the district, offering them five furlough days based on financial *projections* to alleviate their fears of a worse tomorrow, and they turned us down.

We pointed out that Glendale teachers are dismally paid compared to other districts in Los Angeles county because we have always given up 1% of a salary increase to maintain our benefits. In two areas, our teachers are in the lowest quartile. In all but one, our teachers are all below the median. Neither teachers nor the district would stand for our teachers being paid so low compared to other schools in the county. But our teachers have been allowed to be because we have placed a priority on fully funded benefits. Honestly, at our com-

paratively low pay, we literally cannot afford a health benefit cap.

The good news is that Alicia Harris, your Vice President, Bryna Schreier, your Secretary, and I all attended a Health Benefits conference that gave us

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more options for bargaining with the district. We spoke with different vendors of benefit trusts, learned about a

free training for our health benefit committee, and found out the right questions to ask our broker.

We can work with the district to curb health benefit costs. All they have to do is take the cap off the table because we will not subject our membership to double jeopardy.

I have faith that our District Board members are reasonable, fair minded people who will seize this opportunity for true collaboration in meeting both of our agendas; contain the cost of health benefits and avoid a cap.

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Statewide Day of Action

By Michael Romo, GTA Executive Director

It's Time to Stand Up for Students – Join in the Statewide Day of Action for Students and California's Future.

You may be aware as educators that over the last two years \$17 billion was cut from California schools and colleges. You may also be aware that entire art, music and PE programs have been eliminated throughout the state. Class size meanwhile has been increased in many school districts. If that weren't enough, you would also know that more than 16,000 of your fellow educators were laid off last year. You would know all of this because it was happening all around you but parents, the consumers of the services that all of us provide, have no idea of the depths of the cuts made to education.

All of these cuts have taken place while large California corporations have enjoyed tax breaks. That's right, while education funding has been massively cut so too have the taxes of large California corporations been cut!

Now, this year in addition to all the cuts education has taken, our students and schools are being threatened with more cuts.

We cannot let this happen without speaking out against this lunacy. Educators must join other concerned citizens in rejecting this slash and burn policy and join together to fight for the resources that our students deserve. We must speak out against these cuts so that parents are aware of the further educational harm that their children will suffer if they become reality.

To this end CTA is asking it's members to keep the date of March 4, 2010 open so that they may join thousands of educators, parents, fellow union members and concerned citizens in an urgent Statewide Day of Action for students and for California's future. CTA is asking you on this day to join in making sure that students get the resources that they need to grow and succeed in life. Rest assured that on March 4, 2010 a great cry will be heard throughout the state. That cry will let politicians and decision-makers know that education is essential to California and that students have been harmed enough and that we are united in seeing that no further harm comes to them.

Join us; it's time to stand up for students.

For more information go to www.standupforschools.org



Health Benefits Cap is Not Acceptable

By Alicia Harris, GTA Vice President



I write this message having just returned from the California Public Employers-Employees Health Care Coalition annual conference with Tami Carlson and Bryna Schreier. It was a very informative conference where we heard from associations, school districts, insurance companies, and non-profits on strategies to reduce health care costs. I was most excited to hear of successful partnerships between associations and districts where their health benefits committees work both collaboratively and tirelessly to find the best rates possible for health care. Our existing health benefits committee, which I admittedly sit on and has members from GTA, CSEA, GSMA, and the GUSD, can definitely be revamped to work as well as others throughout the state do. I look forward to sharing with the health benefits committee as well as the GUSD Board ideas gained to improve our work as partners in this health care crisis.

Further, I left all the more convinced, not that I really needed any convincing, that our offer of five furlough days over the next three years as opposed to a cap to health benefits is more than fair and reasonable. Currently, rather than negotiating aggressively against the health care companies, the district is accepting the rate hikes shared by our health care broker and trying to now pass it on to us. This is not acceptable. Our offer will “ride out the economic storm” (to use the district’s language) and we can take the time that we are not negotiating against each other to rework our health benefits committee and gain the tools we need to really negotiate as a unit against the rising health care rates.

I know from talking with members, feedback from the general membership meeting, and the preliminary survey results, that the vast majority of members feel as strongly as I do that we cannot accept a cap to health benefits. Continue to stay informed, united, and ready to be called upon to act.

Public Opinion is Critical

By Bud Yoho, Community Outreach Chair



With all the cut backs in education, example: lay offs, furlough days, and caps on health benefits, we need the public on our side.

One of the ways we can do this is to state our case.

We need to share how much money it would have cost us and our families if we had a cap placed on our health benefits. Tell your story about the last time you were in a hospital.

One of the best benefits teachers receive is health benefits. This benefit attracts good teachers and keeps us here.

Over the years we gave up salary increases and took less to keep our health benefits.

If there is a cap placed on our benefits with inflation, layoffs, no COLA and higher taxes; we will be working for nothing.

Please support GTA by telling, writing and sharing your stories to our GUSD Board, the public, and the media. Remember, “The Pen is Mightier than the Sword.”

I can't remember when teachers had so much placed on them and so much to lose. It's as though we are going backwards.

Get involved and share your stories.

Happy New Year from The Standard!

The New Year is here and as always, The Standard is available to answer any of your questions about coverage. Their dedicated CTA Customer Service Department can be reached at 800.522.0406 from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time or write to ctaservice@standard.com with any questions or concerns.

Newly hired CTA member, or new to your district?

If you're a newly hired CTA member, or transferring to a new district, now's the time to get the coverage you need. During your first 120 days of new employment, you have a one-time opportunity to apply for Disability Insurance and/or up to \$200,000 of Life Insurance – without showing proof of good health. This opportunity is ending very soon - call The Standard's dedicated CTA Customer Service Department at 800-522-0406 for more information.

Wedding or baby due this winter?

Congratulations! Remember that within 31 days of a Family Status Change, you can add or increase Life Insurance coverage up to \$200,000 and/or add Disability coverage, all without providing proof of good health. Family Status Change includes birth/adoption, marriage/domestic partnership and other qualifying events. For more information about this enrollment opportunity, or to file a maternity Disability claim, visit us at www.cta.org and click through to The Standard.

Retiring this year?

As you plan for this new chapter in your life please don't forget that you and your loved ones can continue a portion of your current, active CTA-endorsed Life Insurance if you maintain a CTA-NEA Retired Lifetime Membership and apply within 120 days of retirement. To get more information, contact The Standard's dedicated CTA Customer Service Department at 800-522-0406.

Updating your files?

Make sure to call The Standard if you're moving to a new address or needing to make changes to your beneficiary designation. It's important to keep your records up-to-date, and it's easy to do. Simply call The Standard's dedicated CTA Customer Service Department at 800-522-0406.

Questions?

Call The Standard's dedicated CTA Customer Service Department at 800.522.0406 (TTY), 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Or, email ctaservice@standard.com. And if you haven't taken a look at CTA's Web site, visit MyCTA at www.cta.org.

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Important Reminders



◆ Dates to Remember—Mark your Calendar!

- January 25th STRS Workshop*
 STRS Check Up—for teachers nearing retirement
 3:30—5:00
 Burbank Moose Lodge
 1901 W. Burbank Blvd.
 Burbank
 RSVP: (818) 240-9180

- February 8th STRS Workshop*
 STRS Fundamentals—for all teachers
 3:30—5:00
 Professional Development Center
 319 N. Central Ave.
 Glendale
 RVSP: (818) 240-3924

- March 6th GTA Teacher Appreciation Event at
 Santa Anita Racetrack

- ◇ Visit our website at www.glendaleteachers.org to find information about:
 - STRS Workshops in LA County
 - Rep Council Dates
 - Your ContractAnd much more!

- * Attention Glendale teachers: Those planning on taking advantage of the retirement incentive this year or planning to retire next year, need to make an appointment to meet with a STRS representative concerning their individual situation. STRS representatives are available in Glendale. Call the district for information regarding setting up an appointment with a STRS representative.

The Miserable Liberal

By Stefane Zamorano

"Press the Meet"

I walked into the teacher's lounge one morning and a colleague asked me had I watched *Meet the Press* with David Gregory?"

I wanted to say, "Do you mean, did I watch 'Press the Meet' with David Gregory?" But I didn't because schools are typically pretty serious places and humor is a rare commodity these days.

My friend told me I had missed Al Sharpton, Newt Gingrich and the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan discussing changes to improve education in America. I was intrigued because this trio sounded more like something I might spit up on accident. Seriously. These three men? Touring the country? Together? Examining the problems with the educational system?

Hey fellas look no further. I have your answer. It really is pretty simple. It's so simple you probably will ignore it and discount it because that would mean your national tour would have to conclude.

After viewing this "Press the Meet" segment I learned: Arne Duncan - our newly appointed Secretary of Education - who is from the business world, wants to incorporate healthy competition for more funding for high performing schools. And schools can be innovative just as long as they tie student test scores to teacher pay. Wow. Make learning a competition for money. Adios, "No Child Left Behind", hello, "Race to the Top"!

Test scores and funding. Yeah! That really does sound progressive. Or punitive? I can't tell. Who needs critical thinking skills when you have a CEO like Arne Duncan running things like a factory?

Al Sharpton on the other hand seemed like his heart is in the right place. He even surprises the viewing audience when he shares he had teachers who made a positive difference in his life. Imagine that.

However, David Gregory quickly - almost gleefully - points out how teacher unions have continued to stand in the way of educational progress. Unions are destroying America!

Sure that makes sense. I wonder if David Gregory is in AFTRA; that's the union for newscasters and talking heads like David Gregory.

And as for Newt Gingrich being a participant in improving education...YIKES! This is a real life example of irony. Newt Gingrich, a man who once worked towards dismantling the Department of Education. That sounds way too much like something out of *Fahrenheit 451*. Who needs that pesky Department of Education? Oh irony.

Arne, Al and Newt suggest that the school of the future means more standardized testing and finally getting rid of unions while creating more schools of choice. But if you dig a little deeper you'll discover Arne's contribution to education turned out to be creating more military type middle schools and high schools in low-income communities in Chicago.

I mentioned earlier all they had to do is ask me what type of reform does public education require that would ensure greater success for our youth in America. My answer: Smaller class sizes and equal access. The smaller the class size the more likely my instruction will meet the standards as well as the needs of my students. Schools aren't factories and schools should not be turned into a military type institution, unless, you are planning on recruiting the young, the poor, and the underprivileged to fight and protect our country.

At the conclusion of the segment David Gregory poses this question to Newt Gingrich, What is the knowledge most worth having in 2010 if you are a high school graduate? What do you need to know? What should the end product look like?

Newt states, "I'd say the first thing you need to know is about yourself and your own values and your own concerns. The second thing you have is a good work ethic and the ability to be honest. And the third thing you have to know is how to learn whatever you're going to need to be successful."

Fascinating answer Gingrich. By the way Newt, none of those elements can be tested or measured on a standardized test.

Here is your homework assignment: Check out *Meet the Press* with David Gregory as he discusses Race to the Top. Next get informed and read about the program that wishes to attach teacher pay to student achievement i.e. test scores. Then consider how will low performing underprivileged schools attract the best and the brightest? In addition, notice how frequently proponents of Race to the Top seem to consistently glorify Charter Schools and vilify unions.

Public schools must accept all students with various learning abilities and disabilities; while Charter Schools are not necessarily held accountable by the same standards or educational requirements. So the next time you read about Race to the Top and how unions are preventing schools from being successful academically remember that we are members of a wonderful profession and the purpose of our union is to support each professional in the classroom ensuring the working conditions allow each teacher to meet the demands of educating the public.

My union continues to inform, support, negotiate our benefits as well as our contract with the school district, which really means protecting my future.

Ms. Zamorano is an English teacher at Crescenta Valley High School.

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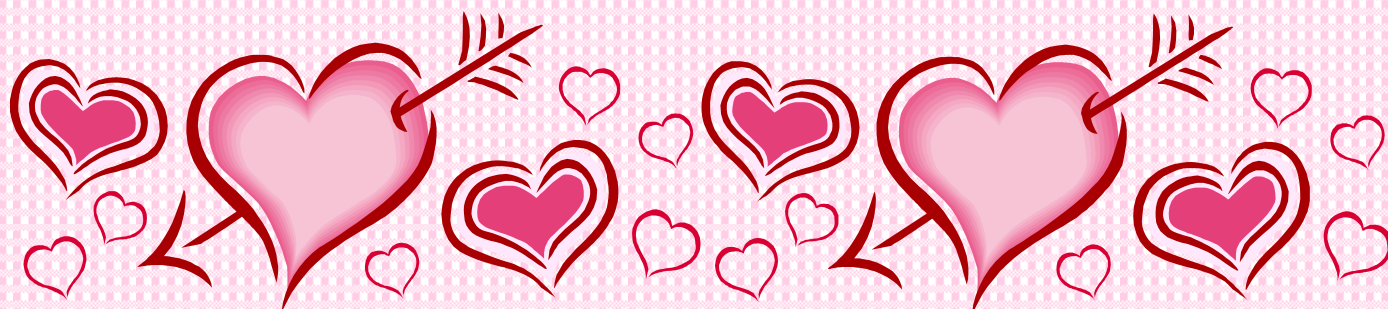
Call early to reserve your spot. Seating is limited.

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“If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn’t want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher’s job.”

Donald D. Quinn

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