

VEA Voice

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President's Message

Tentative Agreement

On January 25th & 26th, VEA held its ratification vote on the tentative agreement (TA) between VEA & VCUSD. I am very pleased to announce of those who voted, 96% were in favor of the agreement. VEA Leadership and the Bargaining Team continues to believe that this TA was the best deal that we could get on behalf of our members.

Of course, we also recognize that there is still more work to be done, especially surrounding our working conditions, health benefits, and other issues. A retirement incentive, for instance, is something that I have received several e-mails and messages about on Facebook. The good news is that School Services, an organization that presents infor-

mation on the State Budget, has again asked Districts to look at the financial feasibility of offering another incentive. VCUSD and VEA are now engaging in what is termed "Interest Based" Bargaining. This allows for both sides to meet on a continuing basis to hammer out agreements on issues as they arise. Both the Bargaining Team and I understand that there is an increased interest among our membership about the possibility of offering another incentive this year. The Bargaining Team will bring those concerns to the table.

I also think that it is incredibly important to give a special shout-out to the Bargaining Team for their hard work in this last round of negotiations. It is important to remember that the District pushed hard on pay-cut (aka furlough) days. Your Bargaining Team pushed just as hard back and asked the District what they were willing to take off our plates. Regardless if any or no pay-cut days occur this year or next, the reduction of the 18 hours, the reduction of the two after the duty day mandatory meetings, and rollback of student contacts at our middle schools and high schools.

As it stands right now, VEA does not anticipate the need for any

pay-cut days for this school year. However, keep in mind that this is based on the State budget and final numbers have not been determined. We are very close to the first tier, so there is a slight possibility that we may take ONE pay-cut day for this year.

Chevy's Social

I do hope that you will consider attending our next Social at Chevy's on Monday, February 13th. This is a great time to meet and mingle with colleagues from other school sites. I also hope to have a couple of special guests at this next Social as well.

ACLU Settlement Agreement

VEA continues to meet with the District on how best to meet the terms of the ACLU Settlement Agreement. The District cannot require any VEA unit member to give up any of their leave to attend a mandatory meeting that is scheduled during the day. Those scheduled beyond the duty day would require unit members to be paid for their time. If the District tells your school site that they cannot pay for your time beyond the duty day, then you have the option to leave.

Christal Watts, President

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Rae Lucero and Robin Christiansen, Teacners from Highland Elementary

Chevy's Social!

Monday, February 13th.

Come to our next Social at Chevy's from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. in Vallejo.

Come enjoy good food, non-alcoholic beverages, and good company.

We hope to see you there!

Contact Susanna Urias for more information at susannaurias@att.net

CTA Endorsed Disability Insurance Plans

With the coverage you may have from your employer, your spouse/domestic partner or other sources, it's easy to assume you have all the insurance protection you need. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. To help members fill in what could be a big gap in coverage, CTA offers Disability Insurance plans.

The CTA-endorsed Disability Insurance plans offered through Standard Insurance Company are designed to meet the specific needs of educators and education support professionals. The plans combine great features and benefits with a dedicated, responsive service team. That's why more than 80,000* of your peers have chosen the plans to protect their income and way of life.

Subject to any benefit waiting period:

- \$25 per regular day of required attendance during fully paid sick leave or restored sick leave.
- Up to 75% of regular daily contract salary and extra duty pay, reduced by deductible income**, for each regular day of required attendance on which you're disabled during the first and second benefit years. Minimum benefit of \$30 per regular day of required attendance.
- \$35 per calendar day while you are confined to a hospital as a bed registered patient as a result of your disability, with no benefit waiting period. This is paid in addition to any disability benefits that may be payable.
- Covers disabilities occurring on or off the job.

Take a moment to check your pay stub and benefits information to confirm that you have the income protection you need to safeguard your way of life. To learn more about the CTA-endorsed Disability Insurance plans, click [here](#) or call The Standard's dedicated CTA customer service department at 800.522.0406. And through May 31st, 2011 you can transfer your coverage from another carrier to the CTA-endorsed plans by calling 800.522.0406.

*As of 3/31/11, based on figures developed by Standard Insurance Company

**Examples of deductible income for disability coverage (see your certificate of insurance for a full listing and exceptions): personal leave pay, severance pay, substitute differential pay, catastrophic/extraordinary leave bank, salary continuation, workers' compensation, work earnings, social security, State Disability & CalPERS/CalSTRS benefits.

For costs and further details of the coverage, including exclusions, benefit waiting periods, any reductions or limitations and the terms, under which the policy may be continued in force, please sign in and review the CTA Group Life and Disability Insurance Plans Brochure or call The Standard's dedicated CTA customer service department at 800.522.0406 (TTY), 7:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. PST.

A Cautionary Tale: QEIA Waiver Denial — Christal Watts

On Wednesday, January 11, 2012, the California State Board of Education (CSBE) denied the waiver that the Vallejo City Unified School District had requested in regards to QEIA funding. Most of us who went to Sacramento to testify knew going in that it was a long shot. None of us believed that it would be decided as quickly as it was by the CSBE with only one Board member stating her reasons as to why she had to vote no on the waiver.

It needs to be said at the outset that Superintendent Dr. Ramona Bishop provided the CSBE with a well-defined plan in order to right the ship. I strongly commend her for her tough message to the CSBE and for her willingness to take responsibility for this situation – a situation that was not created by her.

In meetings that I had with her regarding our presentation to CSBE, she expressed a willingness to work with VEA if the waiver was denied for Vallejo High School and Cooper Elementary. It was also stated to me that it is anticipated that lay-offs for this year may be minimal due to attrition. VEA will continue to push for being part of the lay-off process as well as ensuring that the contract is followed for teachers impacted by any involuntary transfers.

That being said, this denial serves as a reminder to the District the crucial piece that had been missing during previous administrations.

First, last year the California Teachers Association (CTA) issued a report, "Lessons From the Classroom: Initial Success for At-Risk Students". One of the essential components for those schools that were most successful was the willingness of district administration to work with teachers and their unions in order to engage in essential and meaningful collaboration. This meant that most of the decisions made were site based driven and not driven from the top.

As many of you know, there has long permeated in this district an unwillingness to engage in meaningful collaboration and an outright refusal to work with the union in order to make working and learning conditions better for our students and teachers.

Second, one of the arguments that the District made in order to try to secure the waiver for QEIA funding was the lack of stability at school sites. It was argued that this instability had

a severe impact on their ability to meet the API goals for QEIA. While VEA recognizes that none of us could have imagined the severe economic impact of this recession, let it be said that were a couple of options that the HR Department could have chosen in order to mitigate the instability.

For instance, VCUSD could have used the language in Ed. Code that allows for "skipping" any unit member that had received specialized training and/or is providing specialized services. This is the language that districts across the state of California use in order to "skip" special education teachers and more significantly, it is the language they used to "skip" our colleagues who teach at Vallejo Charter School. While VEA recognizes that this option is controversial, it is still an option available to the District through Ed. Code.

When the District chose to ignore this route, they also made the unfortunate decision to not work with VEA when it came time to bring people back from the rehire list. Instead, the HR Department made the decision that when people were brought back, they would be placed wherever they had an opening for them. Some of our teachers who had only taught primary, now suddenly found themselves teaching at the middle school and conversely some of those who had only taught middle school, now found themselves teaching elementary. No one, except for VEA, thought it was prudent to ask teachers what they wanted.

At Cooper, this meant a significant change in their staff at the start of the 2009 school year, where they saw 9 brand new teachers out of a staff of 28.

When I spoke to the CSBE on Wednesday, I expressed that I was cautiously optimistic. VEA has often fought for maintaining stability at our school sites when possible. This is because we believe that through stability, long-standing, trusting relationships are developed and built upon. This stability transmits to our students, which ultimately leads to our students performing at the very best of their abilities.

If we are all truly here for the kids, then it is of absolute importance that we work together.

The Winner is . . .

VEA is pleased to announce the school sites with the most Bargaining Surveys completed & turned in were the following:

1st Place (\$300 Gift Card) Franklin Middle School

2nd Place (\$200 Gift Card) Steffan Manor Elementary

3rd Place (\$100 Gift Card) Widenmann Elementary

Congratulations!

Promoting Tax Fairness—CTA

While public education and health care programs for children have been devastated by state budget cuts over the last two years, big businesses in California have been handed tax breaks that will cost California taxpayers billions.

- As part of recent state budget agreements, California lawmakers approved three tax breaks for big corporations that will cost the state of California and California taxpayers more than \$2 billion a year. 80% of these tax cuts will go to corporations with gross incomes of over \$1 billion. 9 businesses will receive tax cuts averaging \$33 million a year.
- These permanent tax loopholes were passed with no public testimony and require no review for effectiveness or economic benefit. The tax breaks contain no requirement to create a single job in California.
- In the state's tough economic times, the money given to these corporations could be used reduce class sizes, buy new textbooks, provide grants to college students or give dental care to low-income kids.
- Other loopholes allow corporations to avoid paying their fair share of local property taxes.
- Proposition 13 prohibits the reassessment of any property except when ownership changes. It was designed to protect home owners, and the sale of a home is very straight forward. But big corporations often use loopholes to hide ownership changes, which has led to a significant shift in who pays the taxes in California.
- In Los Angeles before Prop. 13, single-family homes accounted for about 40% of the property tax burden. This year, home owners are picking up 56% of the tab.
- Before the law was passed, San Francisco commercial property owners contributed 59% of property tax revenues, while residential property owners paid 41%. Today, those numbers have flipped. Business owners pay 43% of property taxes, while home owners pay 57%.
- On average, California business property is assessed at only 60% of its full market value.
- It's time to level the playing field and close the corporate loopholes.