

LegAlert



21 August 2009



Oppose Hasty Implementation

Urge Lawmakers to Move Carefully on Gov.'s Federal Reform Plan

Your help is needed immediately to block Gov. Schwarzenegger's hasty implementation of some ill-advised federal reform proposals that could have the same negative impact as the worst provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has announced his new education reform agenda that is more of the same policies that voters rejected in 2005. At the insistence of Federal Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Gov. Schwarzenegger is pushing the legislature to adopt some major changes in California education law in order to become eligible for some new federal funding. In fact, on Thursday he announced he was calling a special session of the legislature to work on state barriers to school innovation and improvement.

Even to apply for these "Race to the Top (RTTT)" grants, lawmakers would have to change the state's rigorous academic content standards and assessment system; mandate student test scores be used as a "significant factor" in teacher evaluations and compensation, promotion, and dismissal; and link teacher data and student data at the state level with unknown access and consequences. Many of these changes would harm, instead of help, our students.

Background: New Federal Grants

The Obama Administration has created "Race to the Top (RTTT)," a package of competitive grants authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The program is set to provide \$4.35 billion dollars to the 50 states. If California receives a "fair share," it will get almost \$500 million in one-time funding.

Currently, the RTTT regulations are up for comment and review by the public. CTA, other state affiliates of the National Education Association (NEA), and the NEA are writing responses to the proposed RTTT regulations in commentary due to federal officials by Aug. 28. After the US

Department of Education (USDOE) reviews the comments, the USDOE is expected to finalize the regulations in October 2009. At that time, states will be able to apply for Phase 1 of the RTTT competitive grants, and the awards are expected to be made early in 2010. States that apply but are not awarded grants in Phase 1 may reapply in Phase 2, along with states that are applying for the first time in Phase 2. Phase 1 grantees may not apply for additional funding in Phase 2; they will receive full-sized awards in Phase 1.

CTA Coordinators: Contact Lawmakers

Contact your state Senator and Assembly Member now. Use the talking points below and then deliver the same message to Gov. Schwarzenegger's office. Also organize other CTA members and school supporters to contact their state Senators and Assembly members. Tell lawmakers and the governor:

√ Governor and Lawmakers should not rush into education reform by changing effective state laws just to meet an arbitrary deadline set by the USDOE.

√ The proposed regulations are more of the same one-size-fits-all approach of the NCLB that has failed California students and schools for the last several years.

√ These proposed regulations would undermine California's high academic standards, some of the most rigorous in the nation.

√ The grants represent just one-time federal money. The governor could hold onto 50% of the funds to use as he sees fit. Those dollars might never reach the classroom.

√ California can apply for this one-time money in the second round of federal grants. That would give everyone time to review the proposed regulations and do what's right. California schools and students need reforms that make sense.

For more information, contact CTA Legislative Relations Manager Lori Easterling or GR Communications Consultant Len Feldman at 916.325.1500.

California Teachers Association Legislative Relations Department
1118 10th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, 916.325.1500; Fax: 916.325.1584