



June 26, 2006

Dear UTLA Member,

In the past few days, the public has been subjected to a whirlwind of confusion regarding the legislation that UTLA, CTA, and the mayor are jointly sponsoring in Sacramento. We want to set the record straight and explain what this agreement is, how it is consistent with UTLA policy, and why we believe it could greatly benefit our students, ourselves, and the communities we serve.

Let's first take a look at the bad ideas in the mayor's original plan that we successfully fought off.

- **The mayor wanted full control of all schools. That idea is gone.**
- **The mayor wanted 100 new charter schools. That idea is gone, and thousands of union jobs are saved.**
- **The mayor wanted to contract out certain services to non-union businesses. That idea is gone.**
- **The mayor wanted to take away most of the School Board's power. That idea is gone, and the democratically elected Board is preserved.**

Here are the main features of the agreement:

School Board and the Council of Mayors: The proposed legislation takes mayoral control off the table. The School Board retains its essential roles, including policy making, collective bargaining, and approving the district budget. Instead, the intent is to create a partnership between the district and the city. So, a representative of the Council of Mayors, which is dominated by Mayor Villaraigosa, would be given the right to sit in on Board meetings to consider the selection of a new superintendent. The Council would also have the right to ratify the Board's superintendent selection.

Support for high-needs schools: A demonstration project would be created consisting of three high schools and their feeder early education centers and elementary, middle, continuation, and adult schools, which would be selected by the superintendent and the mayor in collaboration with all stakeholders. These would not be charter schools. This project, inside the district, would be governed by a partnership, led by the mayor, which includes the district, school employees and their unions, and parents and community-based organizations. Project schools would be characterized by creativity and innovation, with support for teachers and parents to play a central role in school decisions.

Teacher empowerment: In the district as a whole, teachers and certificated staff would be given a more central and authentic role in the adoption of curriculum and instructional materials, including teachers constituting a majority on district curriculum committees along with greater flexibility at the school site.

Expanded authority for Superintendent: The legislation would grant the district superinten-

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dent the full authority to implement the policy of the Board of Education within the major budget categories approved by the Board; to hire and dismiss management staff and other employees (consistent with existing law); to handle the fiscal and business operations of the district; and to have full authority over the district's facilities program.

Program has to be renewed: The bill would sunset in six years, requiring new legislation to extend it.

Why this legislation is good for our schools

Through intensive lobbying in Sacramento, UTLA, along with our affiliates, played a prominent role in convincing the mayor that he should not go forward with his takeover plan. At the same time, we were concerned that to simply maintain the status quo would not be good for students or our members. The district has stonewalled real reform for years and continues to do so. Our attempts to work with the district, even with the threat of mayoral takeover, to give more flexibility to teachers in the implementation of curriculum and more local control have gone virtually nowhere. The district bureaucracy continues to grow, despite declining student enrollment. On the other hand, with the mayor no longer demanding control of the district or the expansion of charter schools, we can ally with the mayor because his reform plan is very similar to our own. With this legislation, we can take a major first step toward authentic school reform.

- The demonstration project, in which UTLA will play a major role, would put the new resources that some of our high-needs schools will receive from the state in coming years in the hands of a true partnership, not the district bureaucracy.
- Teachers would have more control over the implementation of curriculum. This is not about doing away with centralized curricular programs, but rather empowering teachers, not bureaucrats, at the district level to select them and giving teachers at the school sites more flexibility in implementing them.
- By giving the mayor, who is committed to cutting the district bureaucracy and shifting resources to the schools and classrooms, a seat at the table in selecting the superintendent, we have an ally who will be of great assistance in hiring someone who is collaborative, pro-student, pro-parent, and pro-teacher.

Was this a backroom deal?

It is true that we would have liked to have had more discussion with our members and with our critical partners in fashioning this agreement. But this was not possible. We had no idea what the mayor had in mind until he asked to meet on Monday, June 19, with UTLA and CTA to craft the elements of a compromise bill in time to be introduced by Friday, June 23. We felt that it was in the interests of UTLA to be inside the room where we could play a significant role in shaping the legislation. Those who accuse us of making backroom deals conveniently ignore the fact that all legislation is drafted in private and that all bills are subject to intense public scrutiny and modification once they are introduced.

The bill is consistent with UTLA policy

In March, the UTLA House of Representatives unanimously adopted a motion that opposed mayoral takeover and instead proposed that "LAUSD and the City of Los Angeles begin working together to take action on issues of mutual concern." In its motivation, the House stated that "...the students of our city would be better served by the City and the District partnering and collaborating...." In April the House overwhelmingly passed a motion for a school reform campaign, key elements of which were shifting resources from the bureaucracy to the classroom, giving teachers more control over curriculum, and empowering teachers and parents, through school-based councils, to have more control over budgeting, hiring, scheduling, professional development, and curriculum implementation. The proposed bill is entirely consistent with these policies. This bill also in no way slows down the vital work we have been doing the past year to organize our schools, strengthen our union, and fight for a fair contract agreement with LAUSD.

We will be posting the full text of the legislation, once it is finished, on www.utla.net. I hope you'll read the plan and see for yourself why this is a good deal for you and your students.

Sincerely,



A.J. Duffy
UTLA President