

ADVOMTACATE



ONTARIO-MONTCLAIR TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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JANUARY 2010

STATE BUDGET

Most of you have now read about the budget submitted by Governor Schwarzenegger. There will be many areas of disagreement between the governor and the education community. On the surface, the budget provides the same level of funding as last year. Beneath the surface, though, there is a proposal to take a one-time cut from last year and make it largely permanent. He also proposes a reduction of \$1.5 billion targeted at "noninstructional" or administrative costs at districts. He does not provide any detail as to how this is supposed to work. This is sure to receive opposition from the administrator and school board groups, ACSA, and CSBA. Even if the cut is taken at the administrative level, though, it is still going to result in reductions in district budgets, which will necessitate further reductions in programs and personnel.

He makes other proposals that will also generate opposition from education groups, not the least of which is his proposal to take the reduction of the Prop. 98 guarantee from last year and apply it to the maintenance factor (the amount owed to schools - \$11.2 billion) rather than simply repay it as promised. He also proposes to eliminate the sales tax on gasoline and replace it with a fee. This is revenue neutral, but since all taxes become part of the Proposition 98 base, the tactic allows him to reduce the base and thus reduce how much to budget for schools. It also allows him to redirect money that would be required to be spent on roads and spend it on other things.

Much more problematic in the budget proposal is the Governor's proposal to no longer base layoffs on seniority and instead allow districts the flexibility to lay off, assign, transfer, and rehire teachers based on skill and subject matter needs. All of this is subject to mandatory bargaining except for layoffs and rehire. The laws about seniority in layoffs exists because of efforts by CTA to prevent districts from using layoffs to dismiss teachers who speak up, or otherwise irritate their superiors. Expect a big fight from CTA on this.

OMTA is still waiting for the CTA analysis of the budget and will report to you more detail on all of this when it becomes available. In the meantime, it appears that while the budget is not a good one, it is not as disastrous as last year's budget.

One other fact that is extremely clear as well is that without the infusion of money from the federal government via the economic stimulus package, things would be much, much worse than they are. There is much discussion by the Obama Administration, and Congress, about passing a jobs bill early this year that would, among other things, target money to states specifically to save jobs for teachers, firefighters, and police officers. The amount of money being discussed should be enough to offset the cuts in the budget proposed by the Governor. OMTA will keep you posted on its progress.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Rick McClure



The week we returned from winter break, I spent two days in Sacramento participating in CTA's interviews with candidates for Constitutional Office in the 2010 elections. There were teams for Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Board of Equalization. I was on the team to interview candidates for Superintendent of Public Instruction. All three announced candidates showed up and spoke with us, Senator Gloria Romero, Assemblyman Tom Torlakson, and retired Superintendent Larry Aceves. All three were well versed in the issues and spoke with us candidly about their views on education and what they hoped to accomplish if elected. Our team made a recommendation to the CTA Board of Directors, who in turn will make a recommendation to the State Council of Education to act upon at its March meeting. At that time State Council will act on the recommendations for all the offices. Since I'm not at liberty to say which candidate the team recommended, I'll simply say it was an honor to represent you in this way.

Since I last wrote this column, OMTA and the district have come to an agreement about collaboration time. You will all recall that this is an issue I have written about at some length here, making the case that since no one knows the students better than their teachers, teachers should be given the freedom, and responsibility, to set their own agendas for collaboration time on site level Tuesdays. As a result of discussions with Dr. Barnes, Jill Hammond, Jim Kidwell, Karla Wells, and Barbara Mikolasko, principals were directed at their December Principal's Meeting to devote one Tuesday a month to just that. What I am most pleased with about this is not just that all of you now have the time to talk about the things you think are important, but that this is an explicit recognition by the district that teachers are better equipped to make instructional decisions than the district office is, or their principals are. Dr. Barnes has been taking us down that road since he's been here, and this is one more step in that direction. It's a critically important step, though, and one that needs to be continued.

As the board searches for a new superintendent to replace Dr. Barnes, OMTA believes that at the top of the list of qualities for a successful candidate is someone who shares Dr. Barnes' view that school improvement happens best in an environment of collaboration at the school site. The role of the district office is to provide the support for that to happen, not to direct the schools what to do. It is no accident that OMSD has shown tremendous improvement in student learning since he's been here. For that improvement to continue it's critical that the reforms he's put in place continue.

I don't know as of this writing how the board is going to go about selecting a new superintendent. I agree with board member Sam Crowe that the board should use district personnel to conduct the search rather than spend money it can't afford on a consulting company. Having participated in a search myself as a board member in Fontana, and observing what has happened in other districts around us, I don't believe that the results from using a consultant will be better than they would be if we did the job ourselves. Given that there are possibly big budget cuts still ahead of us, I don't believe the board is acting responsibly on this issue. By the time you read this, we'll know. I hope the board does the right thing.

Finally, I want to say goodbye to Barbara Mikolasko who has left OMSD to become an Assistant Superintendent in Central School District. I've had the pleasure of working with Barbara for many years, first in her capacity of Director of Staff Development and then as Director of Human Resources. I always found her to be personable, fair, and honest. Her departure is a tremendous loss for OMSD and I will miss working with her. I wish her well in her new position.

RACE TO THE TOP

OMSD has decided not to join the state of California in its application for Race to the Top (RTTT) funds. OMSD and OMTA discussed the issue and came to the mutual decision not to do this. Given the experience we've had over the years with other programs such as IIUSP (Immediate Intervention for Underperforming Schools), and our experience in Program Improvement, we believed that RTTT was going to be a similar experience, and one to be avoided if possible.

OMSD may still end up in RTTT anyway because it's probably going to be mandatory for schools in the bottom 5% statewide. It's not certain that OMSD has any schools in the bottom 5%, and we're hopeful we don't. Until the state comes up with a list, however, we won't know for sure.

In its attempt to position itself for the RTTT application, the state legislature passed two bills, both opposed by CTA. The most objectionable one was SBX5 1, authored by Senator Gloria Romero. The bill mandates that schools in the bottom 5% statewide allow students to transfer, with no limits as to how many, to any other school that will accept them; furthermore it requires that their home district pay for transportation for them. This not only imposes an unacceptable financial burden on the home district, but also assumes that those schools can't improve and that the best solution for the students is to go to another school. Governor Schwarzenegger even went so far as to refer to this in his State of the State Address as "freeing the children."

Once again the government has taken the position that the low performance of students is the fault of the school and the adults who work there. CTA and OMTA emphatically disagree. Schools that persistently have low scores are also schools that serve the most disadvantaged students, and, more often than not, they don't receive the support they need from the state or the local district. The implicit assumption that the adults at these schools simply aren't working hard enough, or that they don't care, is not only wrong, it's insulting.

To see programs that work for our most disadvantaged students, you only need to look at QEIA schools. QEIA is premised on the belief that what these schools need is additional resources to do things like reduce class sizes. The results so far in California are promising. QEIA schools last year consistently outperformed similar schools that weren't in QEIA. Rather than build on this success, though, California is instead going down the road of more punitive sanctions, premised on the belief that in order for our most challenged schools to improve we must threaten, rather than support, the teachers and others who work there.

This is all very disheartening, but CTA and OMTA will continue to fight on your behalf, and on behalf of the students we serve, to get the state and federal governments to respond in better ways to give you, and every other teacher, the tools and support you need rather than punishing you.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION SCSEBA'S PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN FOR ANTHEM BLUE CROSS MEMBERS

You may have questions about the changes to your prescription benefit. We are providing this fact sheet to help answer most of your questions.

How is my prescription drug benefit changing?

Effective July 1, 2009 beginning with the fourth time you purchase each long-term drug at a participating retail pharmacy, you will pay a higher cost if you continue to purchase those medications at a participating retail pharmacy. But if you choose to use **The Medco Pharmacy** for your long-term drugs, you will pay your mail-order co-payment. Note: You will continue to pay your participating retail pharmacy co-payment for short-term drugs you purchase at a participating retail pharmacy.

What is the difference between long-term and short-term drugs?

Long-term drugs are those you take on an ongoing basis, such as those used to treat high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Short-term drugs include antibiotics and other medications that you take for short periods of time.

What is The Medco Pharmacy?

The Medco Pharmacy provides full-service prescription fulfillment, including delivery of your order to you through the mail. The SCSEBA pharmacy plan includes mail order to offer you convenience and cost savings on prescription drugs that you take on a long-term basis. Medco follows strict quality and safety controls for every prescription filled, and our pharmacies are staffed with registered pharmacists.

How do I request order forms and envelopes?

You can request Medco Pharmacy order forms and envelopes online anytime at www.medco.com. You can also call toll-free 1 800 711-0917 and use our interactive phone system. Please be sure you have your member ID number handy before you call. Listen carefully to the various options and choose the appropriate response.

How long does it take to get my medications when I use The Medco Pharmacy?

Your medication will usually be delivered within 8 days after we receive your order. If your doctor faxes your prescription, your medication will usually be delivered within

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OMTA REPRESENTATIVES

Arroyo: Karen Hirschfield
Berlyn: Crystal Cook, Erik Kobulnick
Bon View: Sally Field, Angela Pratt
Buena Vista: Teyana Smith
Central: Susana Casas, Marina Guevara
Corona: Paul Leal, Dawn Falkenberg
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Lincoln: Edris Boyll-Kuzia/Jamii Jordan
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Vernon: Jeff Joines, MaryKay Scheid
Vina Danks: Teresa Collins, Henry Dutra
Vineyard: Lisa Beasom/Julie Rafeedie
Vista Grande: Helen Cieslik
Wiltsey: Ken Aven, Linda Boren
Music/PE/APE: Gordon Reed
Speech: Susan Yee
Health/Nurse: Denise Mick
Early Ed Center: Leticia Martinez
Hardy Center: Linda Meyer
HFB: Vacant

OMTA Executive Board Meeting
February 1st at 3:45pm

OMTA Rep Council Meeting
February 22nd at 3:45pm

OMSD School Board Meeting
February 4th & 18th
7:00pm at Central School

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

8 days after your doctor faxes the order.

What if I need to speak with a pharmacist?

Just call toll-free 1 800 711-0917. Our registered pharmacists are available for medication consultations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Can I still use a participating retail pharmacy?

Yes. You should go to a participating retail pharmacy for medication you take on a short-term basis, such as antibiotics, and you will pay your participating retail pharmacy co-payment. If you prefer, you can continue to receive long-term drugs from a participating retail pharmacy. After July 1, 2009 however, you will pay more for each long-term drug at a participating retail pharmacy beginning with the fourth time you fill it.

Will I pay for shipping when I use The Medco Pharmacy?

No. There is no charge to you for standard shipping. You pay only your mail-order co-payment on the medications you order. If you request it, expedited shipping is available for an extra charge.

Do I get the same quality of prescription drugs that I get at a participating retail pharmacy?

Whether you use brand-name or generic drugs, you can expect that the medications from The Medco Pharmacy are of the same quality as those you currently use.

What about drug interactions?

The prescription drugs that you get through The Medco Pharmacy, as well as those purchased from a participating retail pharmacy, are checked for potential drug interactions. If we ever have a question about your prescription, one of our pharmacists will contact your doctor prior to dispensing the medication. If your doctor decides to change the prescription, we will send a notification letter to you and to your doctor.

How can I get more information?

You can find additional useful information online anytime at www.medco.com. Our Member Services representatives are also ready to answer your questions at our toll-free number, 1 800 711-0917.

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