

CTA State Council of Education
Executive Director Carolyn Doggett
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Good Morning Council. Yesterday Barbara's speech was right on, and hearing her challenge to all of us to organize...not agonize...reinforced the three things I want to talk about this morning:

First, it's certainly going to be an interesting and challenging year.
Second, history and the spirit of this organization tell us we're up to the challenge.

Third, I thought of that old union saying: An injury to one is an injury to all. But not only the truth of those words, but also the truth of their opposite: A victory for one is a victory for all. And how over the years – through the bold leadership of CTA Officers, our Board of Directors, our staff and all of you, the ripple effects of CTA actions have been felt far beyond our members, students, and public schools.

So, this morning, I thought we would take a stroll back in time, a little history lesson about CTA – you know what they say: once a teacher, always a teacher. But it's important to remember where we come from and to celebrate what we have accomplished.

This will also reinforce why we must fight the battles ahead, because much of what we have fought for and won is under attack.

The California Teachers Association was founded 142 years ago, in 1863. Abraham Lincoln was president of the United States, and California had been a territory of Mexico just 15 years earlier.

Let's look first at the early years – and remember for almost the first 100 years of it's existence – CTA was dominated by administrators. I am only the second executive director who was a classroom teacher and a local chapter president, and I might add the first woman executive director.

Some of you probably don't know, but CTA was created specifically for one purpose...POLITICS.

It was founded to give educators an organization that could lobby the legislature and the governor for more money for public education and higher salaries for teachers.

Now, we've done much more than that, including leading many significant fights for educator and civil rights, but it's safe to say that CTA has fought for, lobbied for, and run election and initiative campaigns for more money for better schools and higher salaries every single year since 1863.

The Association's first legislative achievement in 1866 established free public schools in California for all children.

CTA sponsored legislation that created the state's first "normal school" or teacher training college. That first institution – San Jose Normal School – now San Jose State University, became the nucleus for the CSU system.

CTA also led the campaign for the establishment of the University of California and in 1911 CTA won a long-sought goal when the legislature authorized funding for public junior colleges, which led to the establishment of the community college system.

In 1874 CTA sponsored legislation on compulsory school attendance.

By the year 1890, the California Teachers Association was large enough and well organized enough to exert a strong influence on public policy.

In that year, CTA won its first major court battle. For some years the Association had worked for a "fair dismissal" – or tenure – law. At the time not one state in the nation offered teachers such protection. Teachers could be and were fired for any reason – even those who taught for 10, 20 or more years.

In 1885, CTA had won legislation that at least guaranteed teachers a hearing. School Boards laughed and ignored the law so we went to court, and in 1890, CTA won its first Supreme Court ruling – and won a teacher's job back because she had been denied a hearing.

Every year for the next three decades, CTA fought to strengthen teacher job security.

Finally, in 1911, CTA won the "continuing contract" law – mandating that teachers were automatically rehired for the following year, if they were not notified by June 1 that their services would not be required.

Incidentally the 1911 "continuing contract" law was written by John Swett – the founder of CTA.

He was state superintendent from 1863 to 1867 and he attended every State Council meeting for the next 50 years.

In 1895, CTA wrote the legislation that led to the creation of the California Teachers Retirement System – only the third teacher pension plan in the entire country. It was reorganized in 1944, allowing proportionate benefits at age 55 and in 1959 a survivorship benefit was added, comparable to Social Security benefits.

In 2000, CTA achieved a long-time goal to base the pensions of teachers on their single highest year of compensation. This significantly increased pensions for future retirees. That same year, we also passed a bill to boost benefits for some 24,000 retired teachers with many years of service, who were getting a pittance. And this CTA-sponsored legislation provided additional money each month.

One of these teachers was my mother. Quite frankly, when the bill passed I didn't know it would benefit Mom, imagine her surprise when her pension check went from \$407 per month to over \$1,100. Mom was shocked, but she was sure that Carolyn made it happen. I said "no

Mom, CTA made it happen, because that's what CTA does – fight for all teachers past, present and future.”

Oh no Arnold, you are not touching our pension plans.

Class size has always been a major CTA concern.

Don't fall out of your chairs, but the first CTA sponsored class size legislation, in 1895, set the maximum class size at 80 students. By 1917, the average class size was between 35 and 40, and then they started to creep back up after World War I, and in 1920 CTA had to lobby the legislature to cap class size at a maximum of 70.

The current class size reduction law for grades kindergarten through third was passed in 1996 after an impressive advertising and organizing campaign by CTA that forced Pete Wilson to give us the law.

In 1899, CTA wrote the legislation requiring that all public school teachers must be college graduates.

In 1903, CTA succeeded in ensuring that state funds were made available for high school instruction, a departure from the early concept of public funds for elementary grades only.

In 1910, CTA sponsored an initiative that amended the state constitution and said that public education had “first call” on all state revenues.

It also set state per-pupil funding at \$30 with matching funds from counties and cities. Those figures were raised in 1932, 1946, 1952, and 1957. Each time these advances were led by CTA. And as you know, we continued to have funding victories through today.

In 1911, CTA sponsored an initiative that required the state to provide all students with free textbooks. Until that time, students had paid for their own books, and those who couldn't afford them went without.

In 1912, CTA launched the first-ever recall election in American history...unseating three of the five members of the Berkeley school board.

In 1921, California became the first state in the nation to enact a “teacher tenure” law, a measure specifying that “permanent” teachers could be dismissed only for just cause.

CTA won a truly radical victory in 1927 when the State Supreme Court ruled that a school board could not fire a female teacher simply because...she got married.

With regard to School Construction, CTA has also led the way.

In 1949, CTA sponsored a successful proposition to provide \$250 million in state school building aid. That was followed in 1954 with another \$100 million.

In the 1960's we added another \$1.6 billion for classroom construction.

In 1998, CTA led the campaign for what was then the largest school construction bond in state history when voters approved Proposition 1A, bringing \$9.3 billion to local school districts in state matching funds.

But we didn't stop there. In 2003 and 2004, CTA organized two successful initiative campaigns that brought \$25.3 billion in school construction monies to repair rundown schools and colleges and build new classrooms.

All of you made that happen.

In 1950, the State Council approved the first of five CTA-sponsored insurance plans. CTA membership now includes a wide range of benefits, including employment liability insurance, death and dismemberment coverage and life insurance, just to name a few.

In 1955, CTA won the removal of the 40-day limit for accumulated sick leave.

And then in 1975, after kicking administrators out of the association, CTA became both a professional organization and a union. The passage of the Rodda Act brought a new era to CTA and the power of collective bargaining to all our local chapters.

I would be remiss if I did not include CTA's proud history of leading the charge for civil rights. This is especially important as we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life.

CTA was the only major organization in California that denounced the practice of segregating African American and Asian American students in separate schools. CTA fought for and won public funding for schools that educated non-white students. The first of those schools was for African American students in Red Bluff. The teacher at that school was Miss Sara Brown. Her school began receiving state aid in 1867 – just eight years after her father, John Brown, led the famous raid on Harper's Ferry.

CTA was the only "mainstream" organization that stood up and had the guts to protest against the internment of Japanese Americans at the beginning of World War Two.

It was also CTA that established schools for children of migrant workers and in 1967 led the authorization of bilingual instruction classes for students still learning to speak English.

CTA led the fight to secure state funding for the education of physically-challenged children. And just last year, it was CTA that pushed NEA to make major changes in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. Those changes will make it easier for special education teachers to meet the so-called "highly-qualified" requirements of ESEA, increase support for professional development and reduce the amount of burdensome paperwork.

It was also CTA that pointed out the challenges to lawmakers in our schools of greatest need, and in 2001 won additional assistance, for those schools that have been labeled low or under-performing based on student test scores.

Two years later, CTA established the Schools of Greatest Need Project that is run through our Institute for Teaching, and just two months ago we got a \$1.9 million grant from the Gates Foundation to begin bringing pilot projects in teacher-led reforms in 6 to 8 high schools.

There have been many other victories:

- The establishment of kindergarten,
- free school transportation,
- vocational and adult education programs,
- duty free lunches,
- minimum salaries for beginning teachers,
- the guaranteed right to participate in political activities,
- the defeat of 226 – payroll protection,
- the overwhelming defeats of two voucher initiatives and the elections of thousands of local school board and state lawmakers who support public schools and educators.

See, I told you, you have achieved a lot. In fact, each and every member of this Council can be proud to stand by that record of accomplishment.

I want to close by talking about what is perhaps one of the most “revolutionary” feats CTA has accomplished in the past 142 years. In my mind nothing is more radical than the passage of Proposition 98 in 1988.

Prop 98 is the only provision in the constitution of any state that guarantees K-14 public education a certain amount of the state budget.

The minimum funding guarantees of this law saved our public schools during the recession and brought us some of the largest increases in 1995, 1996 and then again in 2000.

The voters of California approved this law because they believe our schools deserve to be funded. My friends, that law, as well as many of our other laws, are under attack by our Governor and his friends.

And I don't care if he was Mr. Universe, there's no way Governor Schwarzenegger can out muscle the 335,000 members of CTA and our more than 500 dedicated staff. Together, we can meet any challenge and I know we are up to the task.

We are here – and CTA exists – to figure out ways to making sure Prop 98 is maintained and protected.

We are here because we believe in free and universal public education.

We are here because we believe in equal opportunities for all our students – pre K through Higher Ed.

We are here because we believe in our members.

I thank you for believing.

I thank you for the battles ahead.

I'm going to leave you today with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in whose honor we celebrate this Council meeting.

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

My friends, we cannot be silent about things that matter.

Thank you very much.