



Teachers Association of Long Beach, CTA/NEA

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UPDATE

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STATE BUDGET CRISIS...WHAT'S NEXT?

The State Budget continues to be mired in crisis as the shortfall in the budget just approved by the Legislature and Governor in September is already facing at least \$12 billion shortfall. The Legislature will meet in Special Session this week and attempt to craft a remedy for the ailing budget. The Legislative Analyst is warning that the deficit could reach \$27.8 billion in the next 20 months if there is no action by the government.

Of course, the outcome of these deliberations is critical for TALB members, our students, and the community, as the District is funded by the State. Any decision regarding cuts to schools will have a direct impact on our schools and our jobs.

The District has already started to make preparations based on the Governor's *proposal*, which the District estimates will require approximately \$40 million in cuts to the LBUSD. Until the Legislature acts we will not know what we face.

On the reverse side of this *UPDATE* is a brief Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) regarding the State Budget Crisis based on what we know at press time. The situation is fluid and we will continue to keep you updated. Expect TALB and our members (you) to fight to keep cuts away from the classroom, fight to defend our work, and defend our well earned pay and health benefits.

SCHOOL LOOP...IS IT VOLUNTARY?

School Loop, the internet based grade tracking and reporting program currently in use at the Middle and High Schools, is voluntary. TALB has received numerous reports that some schools have made use of the program mandatory, increased the frequency of required grade reporting, and not provided adequate training or technology support (working computers).

In response, TALB filed a "demand to bargain" over the mandatory implementation of the program and the impact on working conditions. In response, the District has clarified that use of the program is voluntary.

While there are problems with School Loop, many teachers report that they like the technology and the program. We hope the District will provide increased support for teachers who want to use the program, including improved in-service and available working computer hardware.

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THE STATE BUDGET CRISIS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY IS THERE A STATE BUDGET CRISIS? This crisis was precipitated by cuts in the DMV fees in recent years, combined with a serious downturn in the economy, and a legislature and Governor that used borrowing to balance the budget for the past several years; instead of forcing voters to decide if they want to radically cut services or restore fees and taxes that were cut in prior years. In broader terms, many observers believe that our system of redistricting, term limits, a 2/3 vote on the budget, and the initiative system (e.g., Prop. 13) have all combined to cripple State Government.

HOW WILL THE STATE BUDGET CRISIS IMPACT LONG BEACH SCHOOLS? We won't know the immediate effect on the LBUSD until the Legislature and Governor act on the budget shortfall. The shortfall is estimated to be \$12 billion – meaning that at some point the State can't pay the bills if there are not mid-year cuts and/or revenue increases. The Governor is proposing a combination of cuts totaling \$4.5 billion, including a \$2.5 billion cut to schools, and series of tax increases, highlighted by a temporary 1.5% sales tax increase. His proposal would require about \$40 million in mid-year cuts from the LBUSD. At this writing, there is no sign that a 2/3 vote exists in the legislature to support the Governor's proposal or an alternative – but there is great pressure to act, since doing nothing will result in a grinding crash of State services, including schools.

WILL CLASS SIZE REDUCTION BE ELIMINATED? We don't know what will or won't be spared. Our position is to keep ALL cuts as far away from our classrooms and students as possible. Until the Government acts, the specific nature of the cuts is speculative.

THE GOVERNOR SAYS HE IS GOING TO MAKE ADDITIONAL CUTS TO SCHOOLS THIS YEAR BY \$2.5 BILLION, BUT STILL FUND PROP. 98...IS THIS POSSIBLE? No, this is politics...the same rhetoric and smoke and mirrors that put us in the bind. The bottom line is schools are already underfunded and the Governor is now proposing to whack schools by another 2.5 billion MID-YEAR!

HOW CAN THEY MAKE CUTS MID-YEAR? There currently exists no realistic or legal way to conduct mid-year certificated (teacher) layoffs to account for the proposed cuts. It is possible the Legislature and Governor might agree to legislation allowing for mid-year layoffs...but the result would be utter chaos. The LBUSD budget is in relatively good shape compared to most urban districts, however, Districts such as Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and San Diego might literally go bankrupt.

CAN MEASURE K FUNDS MITIGATE BUDGET CUTS? No, the Measure K funds can only be used for school modernization, upgrades, etc. It is a tragic irony that citizens in Long Beach are supporting schools by passing Measure K, at the same time the Legislature and Governor are acting to cut the basic core of our schools.

IS MY STRS SAFE? STRS has issued the following statement on their website:

“CalSTRS benefits are secure, despite the ongoing historic changes to the world’s financial markets. The CalSTRS retirement, survivor and disability benefits will not change with the downturn in the economy. CalSTRS benefits are not dependent on the funds in the CalSTRS investment portfolio. CalSTRS benefits are a constitutional right protected not only by the California Constitution but also by the U.S. Constitution.” **For more information go to calstrs.com**

WILL THE DISTRICT CUT HEALTH BENEFITS? Health benefits are a negotiated item. TALB and the District just started to bargain a new contract. The TALB Bargaining Team is focused on protecting our Health Benefits. To date, the district has not made a specific proposal to cut health benefits. We will keep you updated on any changes at the bargaining table and, if needed, ask you to demonstrate your support for quality health care.

CAN THE DISTRICT KEEP MOST OF THE CUTS AWAY FROM THE CLASSROOM? We think they can...**but we may need to help them to do that by standing together with the community to be sure that any necessary cuts are as far away from the classroom as possible.** The community expressed confidence in the District by passing Measure K, now the District leadership will need to reward that confidence by making cuts away from our classrooms and students.

WHAT CAN I DO TO FIGHT THESE PROPOSED CUTS? **Stay informed and stay united!**