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State Council Speech
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Good morning State Council.

It's so great to be back with all of you after a busy summer.

Although, with the NEA RA, Presidents Conference and Summer Institute, I feel like I've been with most of you all summer.

You know, it's always busy during an election year, but this year it's been a bit overwhelming.

And I think a large part of that is all the teacher bashing and union hating that has been going on lately.

Look, I know it disheartening and I have to admit it wears on you when you are doing the best you can for your students with the limited resources you've been provided.

So I want to talk a little about these attacks this morning, and offer a different perspective.

First, I want to say THANK YOU—for being an educator, for being an active union member, for fighting for students and our profession, and for caring.

Never question your influence or your expertise.

We are educators, we are CTA, and we will lead the way. Just like we always have.

Films like "Waiting for Superman" and "The Lottery", along with major news outlets like Time, Newsweek, the LA Times, and "The Oprah Winfrey Show," have been portraying educators as the problem and trying to hijack the education reform discussion.

Really Oprah?

You know better.

Teachers are the original education reformers.

For nearly 150 years in California, we have been at the forefront of building a better state for public education.

In 1866, the Legislature passed a CTA bill to provide free public schools to all children.

In 1911, we led the fight to establish community colleges.

And in 1996, CTA won Class Size Reduction for our youngest students.

And these are just a few I chose from a long list of reforms and improvements that California educators have led.

Today, I want to challenge you to not absorb the rhetoric, but to counter it - to fight back with truth.

No one knows better what our students and schools need to be successful than you.

We are not about to let those outside of our profession take over the education reform debate as a way to push a destructive agenda of privatization and more high-stakes testing.

Some would have you believe that our students are waiting for superman.

There's a subtle, but dangerous message in this documentary title.

It suggests that one teacher, like superman, can single-handedly save the day.

Now, each of us knows the power of a great teacher, but one teacher alone is not enough.

The success or failure of a student does not rest solely on the shoulders of teachers.

And while we are often heroic to our students, we don't live in a fantasy world.

We know the challenges we face in delivering what our students need.

We also know that we are better teachers when we have resources, are supported and have the freedom to teach.

The parents at Woodside High School in San Mateo County understand that and made sure they spoke up by hanging a banner in support of local teachers.

We included a photo on the flyers on your chairs this morning.

So while this discussion about “what’s wrong with public schools” is going on across the country, we need to butt in and provide our own unique perspective as educators.

Each of us has our own stories and opinions.

And it’s time America started hearing them.

The solutions our schools need are not going to swoop in from above, but grow from the roots of this organization.

The keys to meaningful education reform are with the people in this room and in our neighborhood schools.

We must continue to develop and push proven reforms in order to positively influence issues like ESEA and teacher evaluation.

When I visit schools every week and look at the faces of students and members, I don’t see them waiting for superman, I see them waiting for Sacramento...and for Washington DC to step up and do what’s right.

Unfortunately, that didn’t happen again this year with the state budget.

It was 100 days late and \$4.3 billion short on what was owed to our schools and community colleges.

Public education has now been cut by \$21 billion over the past three years. Class sizes have swelled, programs have been gutted or eliminated, and more than 30,000 educators have lost their jobs.

Libraries have cut back their hours.

Some have closed altogether.

And college students are giving up, as they can't afford the tuition or find the courses they need.

It's a crime that this state has not made education the priority it should be.

Yes, these are hard economic times and there are realities we all have to face.

But we can't say to a first grader, "come back in three or four years when the recession is over, then I'll be able to teach you to read."

That student and millions more are going to be shortchanged by this budget and there is no "do over."

California students deserve better.

That's why this election is so important.

So much is at stake for us.

We are in the home stretch and the outcome will impact students, schools, our profession and our union.

We can't afford to let up now.

I know many of you are giving your all.

You've been visiting school sites, staffing phone banks and spreading the word to your friends and neighbors.

We have to keep it up.

This election is all about turnout.

Later today you'll be participating in the state's largest phone bank, as we continue our outreach to get every last possible vote.

Phoning starts at 2:30.

I know you brought your cell phones, right?

So what's at stake a week from Tuesday?

Let's start with the governor's race.

This isn't about housekeepers – although the way she was treated says a lot about Whitman.

And it isn't about who called who a member of the "world's oldest profession."

It's about the future of our students, our schools, and our state.

I hope you got a chance to watch the final debate between Jerry Brown and Meg.

Once again, Whitman attacked public employees in general, but she also attacked the people in this room specifically.

Here is what she said about our public schools: "We are now rated almost at the bottom of all 50 states.

And you know who is part of the problem, not part of the solution?

The bosses at the California Teachers Association."

Meg Whitman doesn't quite understand that at CTA, members are the bosses.

We are member-driven, not money-driven.

But you know, when she attacks CTA, she doesn't have to talk about the real issues.

Meg Whitman also doesn't understand the state budget or school finance, because California is almost dead last in per student funding, and her plan will make it worse.

She didn't mention how her plans to cut another \$15 billion from our gutted state budget will avoid cutting \$7 billion more from education.

She has refused to answer that question for weeks now.

When we elect Jerry Brown, we'll have a cooperative and mutually respectful relationship with the governor's office... and we'll at least be part of the conversation.

I'm sure you all remember what Jerry Brown told this Council in June.

Jerry said: "When we invest in our people and in our schools, when we pull together, then we know that we don't just defend the land of our fathers, but we protect and invest in the land of our children. That's the future, that's our future, and together we're going to take back California."

It's clear that Jerry Brown shares our core values.

He loves this state and he's not trying to buy this election.

I mentioned this last week at Region 1, but I find it ironic that Meg Whitman couldn't even get the endorsement of her hometown paper.

The San Jose Mercury News, which covers the Silicon Valley where eBay is headquartered, not only endorsed Jerry Brown, but seriously questioned Whitman's abilities to lead.

The newspaper said Whitman, and I quote, has "demonstrated through her campaign a loose relationship with the truth, a poor understanding of government and a penchant for platitudes."

Obviously the Mercury News is being somewhat diplomatic, but the translation is: she lies, doesn't know what she's talking about, and when she does talk, it's in meaningless clichés.

Whitman has spent \$141 million of her own fortune on this campaign, paying an army of consultants to tell her what to say, and saying different things to different audiences and in different languages.

The Mercury News also wrote "we don't know who Meg Whitman really is, "how she thinks or what she values. She can't buy credibility."

And with the help of CTA members we'll prove she can't buy an election either.

Are you with me?

I've said it before, and I'll say it again:

Listen up Meg,
Our state is not for sale,
our profession is not for sale,
and our schools are not for sale!

This is also a message big corporations and Sacramento politicians need to remember.

And passing Proposition 24, the Tax Fairness Act, is the best way to send that message.

Backroom deals are no way to do business in this state, especially when our schools are used as collateral.

That's why this State Council proposed, qualified... and has campaigned for Prop. 24.

This is our initiative and it's up to us get it passed.

Yes on 24 would stop \$1.3 billion in new corporate tax breaks.

It would help stop further devastation to our public schools and provide millions for our classrooms.

Our TV and radio ads are touting its importance, and its passage should be a top priority for all of us.

By repealing those tax giveaways, Prop. 24 would save nearly 22,000 jobs for teachers, nurses and firefighters – without raising our taxes, and it would guarantee that big corporations continue to pay their fair share.

It's time to give our schools a break, not big corporations.

Now in true teacher fashion, we've got a fun, easy way to help get the word out about Prop 24 on Halloween.

We've done a couple of news events and CTA conferences where we've given away \$100 Grand Candy bars to symbolize the corporate giveaway.

They come with cards urging people to vote Yes on 24.

You can download the card from the CTA website, print it out and hand out Prop 24, 100 Grand Bars to parents of trick-or-treaters in your neighborhood.

Remember, these are for parents, not kids.

You can also write letters to the editor, talk to family and friends, promote the Yes on 24 website on your Facebook page or Tweet about it.

Passing this initiative sets the stage for us to move forward with tax reform and a much needed funding initiative in 2012.

Let's make sure voters pass Proposition 24.

We have a few other priorities in this election as well.

We must re-elect Barbara Boxer to the U.S. Senate.
We must pass Prop. 25 to end the state budget madness.

And we must elect Tom Torlakson Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Torlakson is a former science teacher and he shares our priorities.

He was the legislator who authored CTA's Quality Education Investment Act to help nearly 500 schools of greatest need.

I'm excited to tell you I've seen some of the preliminary results and this program is working.

Using proven reforms like smaller class sizes, more counselors, teacher-led professional development and more parental involvement works.

You will be hearing and reading more about this in the weeks ahead.

Right now, ALL of these races are very close.

And it is why turnout is so important.

We have got to get our members and other union members to the polls.

I want to thank you all for the great work you're doing, not just on this campaign but on everything else that's on your plates.

I know the local issues haven't gone away.

We have chapters at impasse, some at fact finding, and a few gearing up for a strike.

But you all know the outcome of this election will impact those local issues.

We've got 10 days to make our final push. What's the word?

Turnout.

Turnout.

Turnout.

I'm confident with your hard work and leadership we'll show Meg Whitman just what the bosses at CTA can do...and we'll come out on top on Election Day.

I put together a little video reminder that I want to share with you.

This is on our website and will be on our Facebook page as we get closer to the election.

Please share this with your members...or film one of your own.

Just make sure you remind everyone how important it is to vote.

Thank you and have a great and productive weekend.

See you at the phonebank!