

**Carolyn Doggett  
History, Hope, Harmony  
State Council – June 2009**

Good Morning Council.

Thank you David for your kind introduction.

And thank you, David, Dean, Dan, Gail, the CTA Board and all of you for your continued commitment to CTA and all that you do for the students and educators of California.

I also want to recognize and thank our staff for all your hard work on behalf of our members each and every day.

I'd like to begin this morning by sharing a flyer posted by a man looking for his lost dog. You may have seen it.

**Lost Dog:**

Three Legs  
Blind in Left Eye  
Missing Right Ear  
Broken Tail  
Answers to the name of "Lucky"

Now, what if that flyer said?

**Lost State:**

- \$40 Billion deficit
- 35,000 layoffs pending for teachers and education support professionals
- Student programs eliminated
- College fees increased
- Californians without health care
- Term limits create ideological party extremists
- Initiatives galore
- Attacks on unions and worker rights
- Broken legislative and budget system
- Angry voters refusing to raise taxes
- More cuts to education, health care, social services and public safety coming
- Answers to Name of "The Golden State"

No. We are not looking too golden right now. However, those of you who know me, know I refuse to let this negative stuff get to me.

I refuse because I have faith in all of you – the educators of this state and the leaders of CTA.

I have total faith in your officers, your Board of Directors and in your staff. I absolutely believe that by pulling together, and working together, there is no challenge we cannot handle.

I also know we can handle it, because we have been here before and we have handled it before.

In thinking about what I wanted to talk about today three words came to mind: History, Hope and Harmony.

As David said yesterday, there's no sugar-coating it. Our state, our economy, our schools are not in a great place.

There will be thousands of educator layoffs this year. But what also worries me, is how this feels so much like 1978 when angry voters passed Proposition 13, which forever changed taxation and education funding in this state.

It was followed the next year by the passage of the Gann Spending Limit.

The similarities from that time to today are a little eerie.

Listen to what CTA members in 1979 had to say in the CTA/NEA Action – our newspaper before the Educator.

The shackles of Prop. 13 are heavy and have created a climate of extremely low morale.

“I have 40 textbooks for 160 students,” said a Hemet teacher.

“Our nursing service has been cut 100 percent,” reported an El Segundo member.

“I have no reading textbooks, no math textbooks and my room now gets cleaned once every three weeks,” said a South Whittier teacher.

A Compton teacher said she now has more than 40 students in her class.

While a member in Escondido says her classes were increased to the point where today she can spend one and half minutes working with each child each day on reading.

A Los Angeles teacher explained that she was working 12 hours a day, mostly due to additional paperwork, and getting paid for seven hours of work.

The litany is endless: teachers being assigned extra duties, no buses, 23-year old projectors, libraries being reduced from five days to one and a half days, no field trips, no athletic trips, loss of all aids, no summer school programs, three counselors for 10,000 students and no money for supplies.

And while educators were suffering the maladies of education, so were the students.

One member in San Rafael commented: "Student morale is declining due to no after school sports and field trips. Few kids' individual needs are being met."

This article published 30 years ago sounds a little too familiar.

When Prop 13 passed, it reduced local property taxes by 57% and resulted in a cut in local property tax revenue of \$6 billion. Schools districts lost, on average, half their property tax revenue.

In the aftermath years, nearly 55,000 teachers received pink slips.

Prop 13 also changed the governance structure of California's education system.

It centralized decision making – changing California from a local system of local schools, to a state system.

But I don't remind you of these times to depress you, but to let you know we SURVIVED!

CTA has weathered hundreds of storms since our founding 146 years ago, and we will weather many more – even with global warming.

After Prop 13, CTA pulled together, adopted a strategy and set a course for us during one of the most trying periods in the history of the Association. All the solutions didn't come at once or happen immediately, but we kept pushing and we kept working together.

First, we worked to pass a set of "bailout" bills that gave a much needed infusion of cash to local school districts in exchange for lengthening the school day as well as changes to the probationary period for teachers.

Several years later, we passed Proposition 98 to guarantee minimum funding to schools.

However in the early 1990's a prolonged economic slump hit.

Not only were there layoffs, but we entered unprecedented, consecutive years of double-digit increases in health care costs.

At the same time, Governor Pete Wilson withheld cost-of-living increases for school districts for four years in row, and local chapters saw very little in pay increases.

CTA again responded immediately with the legal case that became known as CTA v. Gould.

It recognized that Prop 98 did require the state to pay school districts all statutory cost-of-living-increases and firmly established what has become known as the maintenance factor.

In 2000, when the economy had improved and the state was sitting on a surplus of cash, CTA rallied thousands of members at the state Capitol and forced Governor Gray Davis to repay all the money owed from the Gould lawsuit and add a little extra.

This led to a nearly 11% COLA and most teachers receiving double-digit salary increases.

Then came the dot-com bust of 2002, It pushed the state back into financial crisis, sparked 20,000 layoff notices – although most of them were rescinded – and what ultimately led to the recall of Governor Davis, the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger and the beginning of the second-coming of the anti-tax movement.

During this same time period, we also fought off several bad education ideas, attacks on educators and unions and even passed some helpful reforms.

We defeated two school voucher initiatives.

We defeated two attempts to silence our voices and undermine our union rights and control our union dues.

We rejected several attacks on our secure retirement and even added retirement incentives.

We fought off an attempt to dismantle our due process rights – an attack that is again rearing its head here in Los Angeles.

We defeated attempts to allow discrimination in our schools and protected the rights and safety of teenage girls.

We passed four statewide school construction bonds – count them – four different initiatives that have brought more than \$35 billion to local schools and colleges, including substantial assistance to our CSU and UC campuses.

We passed legislation to reduce class sizes in the lower grades and we protected that law time and time again, most recently this year.

We lowered the voter-requirement to pass local school bonds and we've helped thousands of local chapters pass measures over the years.

And when a governor broke his promise and refused to pay schools the money we were owed under Prop. 98, we sued and won again, using that money to bring additional resources to lower-performing schools, through the Quality Education Investment Act.

So yes, we have had our ups and downs over the years.

But we survived...and thrived in the face of adversity.

We thrived through organizing, mobilizing and most importantly, by working together.

During tough times we must stick together.

It will be easy to point the finger inward. Some of you may be experiencing it in your local chapters.

Members are frustrated and scared.

They got a layoff notice and they point inward.

At the same time, there are going to be enough people pointing fingers at us from the outside, because when things go wrong in schools, blaming teachers is the easy answer.

Some of that finger pointing is already starting – not just here in California but also at the federal level.

That's why it is going to be up to us to work together and build smart solutions.

We put 90 percent of our resources into exactly the kinds of activities that all unions do – collective bargaining, grievance processing, defending our members in legal actions, lobbying and political action.

Bargaining at the local level will continue to be the heart of what we do, but we must also remember how Prop 13 forever changed our education structure.

Unless the whole state is prosperous, there will be very little to negotiate for at the local level.

Adaptability is our key to survival.

We see the challenges and opportunities.

We see the warning signs.

We listen to our members, to each other, AND to the public.

We strive to be proactive.

We continue to fight for reforms that we know will work.

And we do it together. Because in the end, as the saying goes: United we stand. Divided we fall.

Now, you heard a lot about the election yesterday...and I want to thank you for all the calls you made.

Do you want to know how many calls you made? We made 135,000 calls. That's just tremendous!

You know I'm one of those fanatics who loves phone banking – always have – and I really enjoyed making the calls and using the system.

We're still working out some kinks, but it's easy to use.

You don't have to worry about phone lists or dialing the wrong number.

You don't have to dial period.

That's my kind of phone bank.

I also ask everyone to not get discouraged by the polls.

We still need to make a final push before Tuesday.

Because as David said, voting NO or not voting at all, doesn't hurt the politicians, it just hurts us and the California that we all want for our kids.

So please get out and vote on Tuesday.

Encourage your family and friends to get out and vote. Our students need that vote.

They deserve that vote.

In closing. How many of you by any chance saw the news story last week about First Lady Michelle Obama reading to a group of elementary kids?

She visited an after-school program in Washington D.C.

The First Lady read the book, "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day," by Judith Viorst.

I know some of you know this book.

It's the story of Alexander whose day starts off bad from the moment he gets out of bed and only gets worse: Gum in his hair, missing school

assignment, no dessert in his lunch bag and lima beans for dinner. It is a horrible, no good, very bad day.

But when the First Lady asked the group what they do when they have a bad day...as it often goes, it was the kids who gave the best lesson.

Their words are advice for all of us in the midst of the tough times we face.

“Don’t be mad,” said one student.

“Remember, Nobody’s life is perfect,” was the next response.

“Every day is not a good day,” said another.

And finally, one little boy yelled, “Don’t quit!”

Because yes, there are going to be terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days...but WE must NEVER QUIT!!

Thank you very much...have a great Council.