



Contact:

Susan Swigart, Senior Director, Media Relations
(916) 669-3242

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 21, 2006 – No. 17

CSBA VOICES CONCERN OVER L.A. MAYOR'S PROPOSAL
Democratic process of school governance at risk

(West Sacramento, CA) – The California School Boards Association is deeply concerned by the proposal announced today by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa regarding the Los Angeles Unified School District. While the mayor and his team reached agreements this week with teacher unions in Sacramento, it's interesting that the "partnership" did not include individuals directly responsible for running the Los Angeles schools – the governance team of LAUSD.

While the mayor claims to be transcending politics and putting children first, his proposals would weaken, not strengthen the democratic process of school governance. Parents and voters have a greater impact and voice through locally elected school board members who are accountable to them and empowered to affect change.

The back-room deal arrived at this week appears to strip the school board of its constitutional authority to oversee the district's annual budget, set all policies for its local schools, and make personnel decisions regarding its superintendent. And, the mayor's proposal, while specific to Los Angeles, sets a dangerous precedent for similar takeover attempts in school districts across the state. Furthermore, even if this proposal moves forward, it is guaranteed to be tied up in the courts because constitutional issues will need to be resolved.

The mayor's proposal would shift control from the school board to the superintendent, and the superintendent would be selected by the mayor – thus ultimately giving the mayor the keys to the schoolhouse door. Ironically, this proposal brings back elements of the highly controversial AB 2160 (Goldberg, D – Los Angeles) and would subject critical district decisions (e.g., establishing curriculum, setting instructional policy, and making personnel decisions) to collective bargaining. That legislation was soundly defeated by the Legislature in 2002, and every major newspaper in the state editorialized against it.

CSBA supports mayoral collaboration with school boards, and in fact we encourage the Los Angeles mayor to help the local schools by focusing on municipal issues such as homelessness, health care, crime and affordable housing so that our schoolchildren can thrive in their environments.

We challenge the assumptions behind the effort to shift decisions about schools from the elected school board to City Hall. The LAUSD board is committed to addressing the needs of all of its students. The district has made dramatic improvements academically and is fiscally sound, despite assertions to the contrary. Everyone agrees there is more work to be done but the mayor's proposals will damage the reforms already in place and disrupt the board's game plan for continuous improvement in the future.

For more information, contact Scott P. Plotkin at 916.669.3299 (office) or Susan Swigart at 916.296.5873 (cell) or 916.669.3242 (office).

#