



Representing the communities of Agoura, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Encino, Hidden Hills, Lake Sherwood, Malibu, Oak Park, Pacific Palisades, Port Hueneme, portions of Sherman Oaks, portions of Oxnard, Santa Monica, Tarzana, Topanga, portions of Westlake Village, and Woodland Hills

September 2009

Legislative Year Ends with Education Successes

As wild and exhausting as the all-night marathon budget negotiations were at the end, some good things happened this year, especially the success of my education bills. I came to the Legislature in large measure to help reform the way that we structure education in California. This year I was very pleased in getting key education bills passed and sent to the Governor's desk. Unfortunately, right now he is holding all bills hostage to his demands for actions he couldn't get through the normal legislative process, but it is my hope that California's school children aren't going to pay the price for such political gamesmanship.

Here are a few of things of which I am particularly proud that came out of the 2009-10 legislative session and are on the Governor's desk awaiting signature.

EDUCATION

"Race to the Top." Having already been appointed to Chair the Assembly Education Committee last year, I was honored when Speaker Karen Bass announced the formation of the Committee on Education for the Fifth Extraordinary Session which I will also Chair. This new committee will hold a series of hearings to develop legislation necessary to place California in a favorable position to compete for Federal Race to the Top funds. Speaker Bass calls this "a historic opportunity for California," and has stated that "Chairwoman Brownley has my full confidence." The President has given us a challenge, and through this new committee we intend to meet that challenge, including bringing together teachers, parents, school leaders,



l-r: Speaker Karen Bass, Secretary Arne Duncan, Assemblywoman Julia Brownley

researchers, and everyone with a stake in successful public schools. More than \$4 billion is available nationwide in Race to the Top funds. California must be in a position to get our fair share.

It was a particular honor to have the opportunity to meet with U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan earlier this month in a private meeting with Speaker Bass.

His staff indicated that the preliminary guidelines for Race to the Top federal grants will follow review of over 1,300 public comments, thus application deadlines will likely be extended for the first phase into February. While I intend to move quickly to ensure that California meets the President's challenge to innovate, we must also move thoughtfully so that we don't commit to programs we cannot sustain and that will not produce results.

I have scheduled Education Committee hearings to take place in Sacramento on Tuesday, September 29; Wednesday October 28; and Wednesday, Dec 16. I will also convene a hearing in Southern California on Wednesday, November 18.

AB 429, passed on a 69-0 vote and would allow parents and teachers to track individual students' year-to-year progress in a variety of academic areas as required in the **Race to the Top** guidelines. It should help California gain a competitive edge, and allow students to gain confidence as they track their own successes over time.

AB 8, passed 64-0, is an important bill that would begin a process of developing a new school finance system to provide greater transparency and demand more accountability. Years of court mandates and ballot-box revisions have had the unintended consequence of making a mess of the way we fund schools. The current system is not logical, results in significant disparities between school districts with similar characteristics, and makes it difficult for teachers to respond to the needs of their students.

AB 851, passed 67-0, would remove arcane sections of the Education Code pertaining to school district funding, freeing both state and local officials from having to consume their time doing cumbersome and unduly complicated calculations that impede efficient administration.

AB 487, passed 59-0, would help cash-strapped school districts recover some of the millions of dollars they spend annually on instructional materials. Over the last four fiscal years, the Legislature has appropriated \$1.3 billion to California's nearly 10,000 schools to buy instructional materials for the classroom. However, under current law, when materials become obsolete, districts can only donate to libraries, literacy projects or non-profits; or recycle or send them to landfills. **AB 487** would allow school districts to sell their obsolete materials and thus put millions of desperately-needed dollars directly back into the hands of the schools.

ACR 54 is a joint resolution stating the intent of the Legislature to bring per-pupil education spending up to or beyond the national average and to a level that accounts for the actual cost of educating California's diverse student population. We are failing our youth by setting high academic standards but failing to devote the resources children need to meet those standards.

We have one of the highest pupil-to-staff ratios in the country, yet we spend significantly less per student than schools and districts in most other states. We spend \$46,000/year for each prison inmate, but less than \$6,000 for each student in our K-12 classrooms. The priorities we should be setting are self-evident.

OTHER LEGISLATION

AB 1017 would require law enforcement agencies to report annually on the status of rape kits. This follows recent reports that many remain unopened until after statutes of limitation have run on prosecutions because of a deplorable backlog of testing. Rapists who could be linked to crimes and convicted are walking the streets, stalking their next victims. A year ago it was reported that the City of Los Angeles had not opened or tested over 7,000 rape kits, 217 of which were now outside the 10-year statute of limitations for prosecuting the rapists. Nearly 50 other law enforcement agencies in L.A. County also have backlogs.

AB 627 would establish a pilot program to fight an alarming rate of childhood obesity by setting nutrition and activity standards in licensed child care facilities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, almost 20% of children between the ages of 2 and 5 are already overweight. When the state licenses a child care facility, it has an interest in seeing that those facilities help establish healthy eating habits and promote regular physical activity.

AJR 19 is a formal resolution to the President and the U.S. Congress, calling on them to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act which keeps tens of thousands of same-sex couples second-class citizens, without access to equal treatment under the law. Under the current state of the law, same-sex couples are barred from receiving Social Security survivors' benefits, from access to health insurance through a federally-employed spouse, prevented from filing joint tax returns, and are refused hundreds of other protections simply because of who they love.

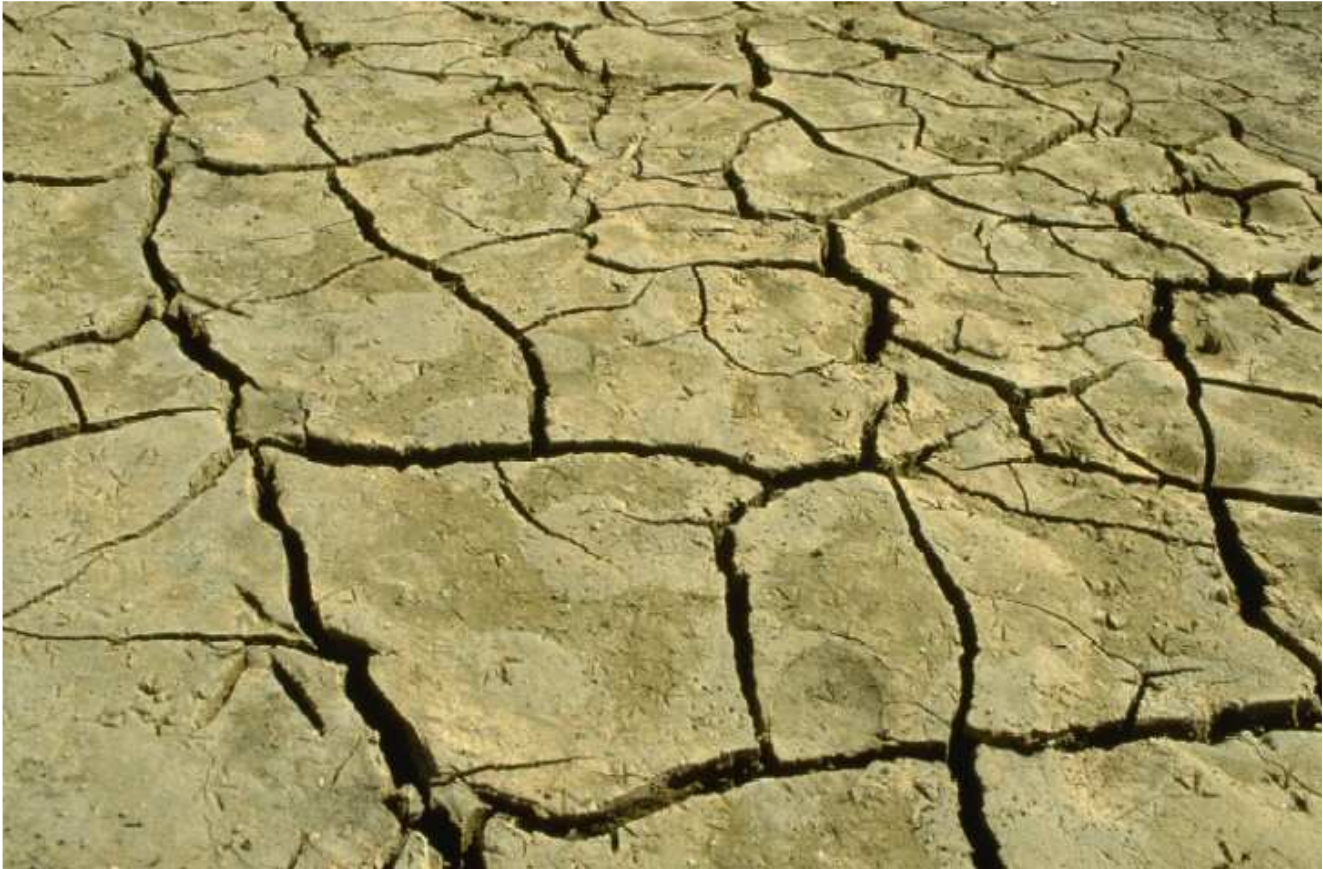
Update on Cleanup of Santa Susana Field Lab

The terms and process of cleanup of this highly contaminated site just north of my district to comply with Senate Bill 990, which I co-authored with then-Senator Sheila Kuehl, has been under negotiation for over a year between the Department of Toxic Substances Control ("DTSC") and the three Responsible Parties ("RP"s) who own and/or operated at the site – the Boeing Corporation, NASA, and the Department of Energy. A draft Consent Order, which is a negotiated agreement between the parties, with the terms that NASA and the Department of Energy say they will accept, was released a few weeks ago to solicit comments from the public to be considered by DTSC during its continued negotiations.

On September 9, Assembly Speaker Karen Bass announced the formation of a **new Select Committee on Cleanup of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory,** and I am honored to have been asked to chair it. The first hearing will be scheduled some time next month on the subject of: "Preview of Draft Consent Order Being Negotiated with Responsible Parties: Do Terms Proposed Support or Undercut Senate Bill 990." Date and time still to be determined. I see the principal charge of this Committee as providing direct legislative oversight to ensure that the final Consent Order is fully compliant with the strict cleanup standards set forth in Senate Bill 990.

Legislation on State Water Policy Founders

Given the long years of drought our state has faced, crumbling infrastructure, serious environmental damage to habitat and countless marine species including the collapse of the state's salmon run, and the political complexity of dealing with often conflicting ideas on water supply, water storage, water quality, and on and on, this is an issue that will continue to have a very high priority in the Legislature. And that will continue to be a major challenge.



Source: www.water.ca.gov

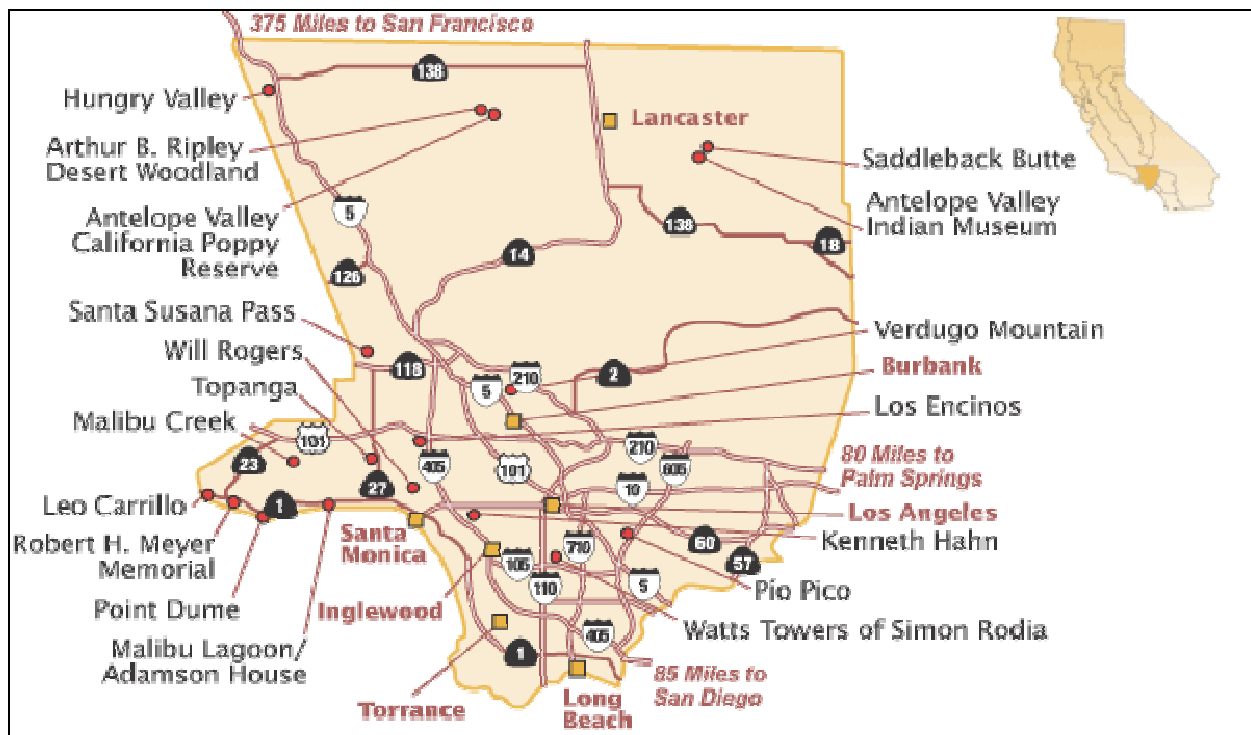
Efforts in this past session to bundle five separate proposals into one broad policy bill was basically pecked to death, including in the effort to reach some kind of bipartisan and bi-regional consensus that ultimately wasn't there. Along with its \$12 billion price tag for the bonds that would finance reform, much of which centered around the problems of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, it died in the waning hours of session as the legislative clock ran out.

We must continue to work on an overall solution that includes ground water cleanup, stormwater reuse, conservation and use of recycled water for landscaping and industrial needs. While many in Sacramento continue to focus on surface storage and conveyance, we need to devote the same sense of urgency to future supply needs in Southern California with an eye toward self-reliance for the region. We desperately need funding sources to invest in Delta levee repair and programs and projects that will make Southern California sustainable in the future.

It's likely that a special session to take up this critical issue again may be called in just a few weeks rather than losing more time by waiting until the beginning of the 2010 session in January.

California State Parks Still on the Chopping Block

Throughout the protracted and grueling debates in the Legislature on how to close California's deep budget deficit, the #1 issue that my constituents were writing to me about, by far, was the Governor's determination to close up to 100 of our beautiful and precious state parks. The Legislature had proposed a temporary \$15 increase in the annual vehicle registration fee, which would have saved the parks and entitled the car owners to free access to every state park in California. A great deal. But the Governor and the Republican caucus killed it.



Source: www.parks.ca.gov

Last month, I was pleased to join State Senator Fran Pavley at a hearing she held in Santa Monica as Chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee to give the public a chance to let us know, as legislators, how strongly they felt about the potential loss of even a single park, much less the enormous number that the Governor is contemplating. If he closed all 100 on his list, it would still save the state a paltry \$14 million. But also at a terrible cost as those parks deteriorate from lack of any upkeep, as they become less safe with no rangers or supervision for park users, as risks to visitors from trails that aren't maintained increase, and on and on.

The public at the hearing was universally passionate about saving "their" parks. And all the while California continues to be a haven for oil companies as they continue to enjoy their unique status in the nation as totally exempt from any taxation for the oil they take from our state. Alaska oil companies currently pay a 25% "oil severance" tax. In California, still \$0.

Photo Gallery



August 4, 2009 – National Night Out in Santa Monica



August 5, 2009 – The Assembly Select Committee on Schools and Community convenes in Los Angeles.



August 9, 2009 – Kickoff of new Ventura County Maritime Museum at Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard.



August 25, 2009 – Oxnard educators, leaders rally on the Capitol steps in solidarity against cuts to schools.



August 29, 2009 – Juan Soria Elementary School in Oxnard celebrates it's Grand opening. Principal Ana DeGenna and an enthusiastic staff welcomed 637 students to school beginning August 19, 2009.



September 1, 2009 – Assemblywoman Brownley honored by Californians Against Waste as Recycling’s Legislator of the Year.



September 21, 2009 – Groundbreaking for Malibu’s Legacy Park. It will provide stormwater control, and include a public park and wetland restoration habitat.

Expo Phase 2 Community Meetings Next Week

The Expo Authority will be hosting community meetings next week to provide updates on the Final Environmental Impact Report for Phase 2 of the Expo Line to Santa Monica.

The meeting will begin at 6:00 P.M. with an open house format, followed at 6:30 P.M. with a progress update presentation and then a question and answer session. The meeting is scheduled to adjourn at 8:30 P.M. All three meetings are identical, so please feel free to attend the one most convenient for you.

For more information you can go to BuildExpo.org or call their hotline at (213) 922-3976.

Monday, October 5

*Vista Del Mar Child and
Family Svs – Gymnasium
3200 Motor Ave.
Los Angeles, 90034*

Wednesday, October 7

*St. Andrew's Lutheran
Church – Nolte Hall
11555 National Blvd.
Los Angeles, 90064*

Wednesday, October 14

*Santa Monica Civic Aud.
East Wing Meeting Room
1855 Main St.
Santa Monica 90401*

Committee and Legislative Appointments

Chair, Assembly Education Committee
Chair, Assembly Education Committee of the 5th Extraordinary Session
Chair, Select Committee on Higher Education in the 21st Century

Member:
Assembly Budget Committee
Assembly Judiciary Committee
Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Budget Subcommittee #1 – Health and Human Services
Budget Subcommittee #2 – Education Finance
Select Committee on Domestic Violence
Joint Select Committee on Reform

Member, State Allocations Board
California Commission on the Status of Women

Legislative Liaison, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
Legislative Participant, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

HOW TO REACH ME:

District Office:

6355 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Suite 205
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
Phones: (818) 596-4141 . (805) 644-4141 . (310) 395-3414
Fax: (818) 596-4150

Capitol Office:

State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0041
Phone: (916) 319-2041
Fax: (916) 319-2141

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