

# Teachers Association's big lie

By Alan Bonsteel and Carl Brodt  
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FOR years, the California public school establishment has been telling the public that California kindergarten through grade 12 public school spending trailed the national average by \$1,000 per student.

The beginning of the end of that falsehood began in December when our organization, California Parents for Educational Choice, released an exhaustive study of California per student spending that pegged us as having narrowed the gap, as a result of California's supercharged economy and the spending guarantees of Proposition 98, to within \$500 of the national average. and closing fast.

Our figures were confirmed on Feb. 17, when the California Legislative Analyst determined the gap was \$460, plus or minus \$90 and, once again, closing fast.

We predicted at that time the California Teachers Association union would withdraw an initiative to raise us up to the national average in K-12 spending for which they were gathering signatures.

Not only have they not withdrawn the initiative, but they've upped the ante, now claiming we're \$1,250 below the national average in per student spending!

Their TV commercials for their Initiative started March 27. Gov. Gray Davis has indicated he considers the gap to be even narrower than \$460, and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin.

while using different figures than Davis, has also concluded that the gap is small and narrowing. Even more amazing is that Davis and Eastin were both elected with campaign contributions from the CTA? and still won't toe the line on the CTA's falsehoods.

Why is the CTA persisting with an initiative that would have almost no effect, using numbers they have to know are false? At first glance, the CTA's actions appear to be a "Charge of the Light Brigade."

They've just finished losing Proposition 26, their initiative to decrease the vote required for school bonds from two-thirds to a simple majority, despite \$25 million in campaign spending.

They're also facing in November two "must-win" campaigns.

Their monopoly comes to an abrupt end if the school choice initiative of Tim Draper, a smart and rich venture capitalist from Silicon Valley, wins the election. And if Al Gore fails to capture California, he'll almost certainly lose the presidency. and thus end the public school establishment's daydream of packing the U.S. Supreme Court with Justices who will vote against the right of parents to choose decent schools for their kids.

One possible explanation is that Wayne Johnson, the arithmetic-challenged boss of the CTA, is embarrassed at the millions of dollars of its members' money he's now wasted on this foolishness, and can't think of any better

way out than to waste even more of his members compulsory dues.

The more likely explanation, however, is that the CTA is playing a highstakes game of chicken with Davis and the Legislature.

hoping they can leverage the threat of running their defective initiative into more money for schools from the legislative process.

At a time when California's public schools are already overcrowded and decrepit, we're facing a tidal wave of a 17 percent projected increase in enrollment over the next five years.

California voters would almost certainly approve more taxdollars for our schools if such a measure were coupled with reforms, such as more of a voice for parents in our schools.

Or there could be a reduction of the shameful 45 percent of all educational tax dollars now spent on bureaucracy.

Neither Proposition 26 nor the as yet unnumbered November CTA initiative have offered any reforms. Worse still, the November CTA initiative is built upon a lie.

If there's one purpose that ought to be paramount in any system of public education, it is to teach the common values of our civilization? truthfulness, trustworthiness, respect for others.

While the CTA may be rationalizing its lies as something the 'are "doing for the kids," they aren't doing us any favors by the example of deceit they're setting for our children. A lie is still a lie.

