

Teachers and politics: What does Proposition 74 do?

Everything about education is political. Important propositions regarding educators are within the power of voters on during the Nov. 8 election. Proposition 74 questions the waiting period for permanent status and dismissal for public school teachers.



VICKI ISACOWITZ
On education

The current situation for newly hired public school teachers involves a two year probationary status with a school district. Within this time frame, teachers are evaluated about once a year by administrators to determine their worthiness of receiving a permanent position, better known as tenure. Once a teacher is rehired and beginning their third year of service, they are finally eligible for tenure status.

In addition to the probationary status waiting period, teachers are required to participate in 150 hours for professional development within a five to seven year period, depending upon their credential level. Continuing education and learning current methods is imperative in teaching, but also overwhelming when correcting and preparing for 120-plus students daily. Having a personal life is not even part of the equation. Teachers comply with the requirements, usually on their own dime, because they have to, and hold strong beliefs in what they are doing; making a difference in the lives of students.

If Proposition 74 passes, the

waiting period for new teachers increases from two to five years, prolonging the opportunity for permanent status. The dismissal process for tenured teachers receiving two consecutive unsatisfactory evaluations is also modified with the passing of this initiative statute. It takes away the numerous hoops that need to be jumped through in order to revoke a tenured teacher's job.

The fact of the matter is that tenured teachers performing poorly still have their jobs while extraordinary teachers are fighting politics to secure their positions.

As with every political issue, there are two sides to the story. Those in favor of Proposition 74 believe the prolonged waiting period for "guaranteed employment" allows teachers an opportunity to gain more experience, thus resulting in higher performing educators working in California's public schools. Having the ability to remove unproductive teachers will further implement this desire. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger supports Proposition 74.

California's State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell opposes legislation under Prop 74. Under the proposed changes, "real" problems occurring in public schools are not addressed. Currently, proven facts supporting the extension of probation from two to five years resulting in higher student performance or better qualified teachers does

not exist.

Training, mentoring, and support are what promote superior teaching. Young teachers, who are the voice of education's future, face discouragement. High demands being set by Proposition 74 make entering careers in education less desirable as job security decreases.

The majority of states in our nation, 33 to be exact, hold a three-year probationary period for newly hired teachers. Including the present status of California, eight states mandate two-year probation, with three states for both four and only one-year waiting periods for tenured status.

It's quite interesting that most major corporations hire their employees on probationary status for a three-month or 90-day period before receiving "permanent" status.

The future of education in California is at stake. Educate yourselves by learning more about Proposition 74. Read the pamphlet sent in the mail. Go on-line and learn about the arguments both for and against this initiative statute before exercising your rights to vote on Tuesday, Nov. 8.

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Her column runs every other Friday in the Sierra Sun. She is co-founder of Clever Minds Educational Services, providing tutoring for students in grades K-12. For information, or to comment on her column, call 582-1707 or e-mail: vicki@cleverminds.org. Clever Minds Learning Center offers personal assistance in the college application process.