



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 14, 2011

California Teachers Association Plans Big Protests

According to the [website](#) for the rally, forcing approximately \$11 billion in tax extensions is just one objective of the protests. The protesters are also seeking to “educate and convince communities to change tax structure and achieve tax fairness in order to achieve adequate, stable, and ongoing funding for public education and essential public services.”

The website explains of the protests:

May 9-13, 2011, will be a week of escalating action ending in a bold statewide unifying activity. The entire week of action will involve a broad coalition of the Education Coalition (including California State PTA, California School Boards Association, School Administrators, School Employees, SEIU, County Offices and County Administrators, School Business Officials and Superintendent of Public Instruction), parents, all other labor unions, and faith and community groups. The week begins and ends with a group of educators (with others invited to join) taking over the State Capitol.



The protesters have adopted the acronym L.E.A.R.N., which stands for **L**egislative **E**very Parent **A**ppreciation and **A**llies **R**everue **N**ot Business as Usual.

Each day of protests will target a different group.

On Monday, May 9, protesters will focus their attention on legislative activities by contacting lawmakers and setting up voter registration tables on college campuses.

The objective for the second day of protests is to reach out to parents via phone calls, letters, fliers, etc.

On Day 3, protesters will show their appreciation for teachers and “allies.” On that day, the protesters will be partnering with the PTA to carry out a variety of activities that shows appreciation for school faculty and staff.

For Thursday, May 12, protesters will be “promoting the need for revenue for schools and other essential public services” by educating members of the community about tax fairness. They will also be encouraging a “Refrain from Shopping” day.



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And finally, the last day of protests will advocate for the declaration of a state of emergency. According to the schedule:

300 volunteers needed for a sit-in in the State Capitol (beginning Monday, May 9) and regional rallies calling on legislators to free the occupants by passing the tax extensions and protecting public education and other essential public services. Regional rallies are being planned for Sacramento, San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, Fresno or Bakersfield, Inland Empire, San Diego.

CTA President David Sanchez, in a phone interview with KQED, indicated that the Wisconsin protests were the model for the Capitol protest part of the events scheduled in California. "Our teachers are absolutely fed up with what's happening right now," he declared.

According to [KQED](#), the dates for the protests are no coincidence, as they are scheduled at about the time that California Governor Jerry Brown will be releasing a revised budget. KQED reports:

The CTA was a big backer of Jerry Brown in the 2010 gubernatorial race, and remains so now. But the union is diverging from the governor on the issue of a special tax election, which Brown continues to insist could happen in September or as late as November. CTA president Sanchez says that any election beyond the Gov's preferred plan of June — where the taxes have expired and thus become tax increases — isn't a politically winnable play.

"I think it would be extremely challenging for the public to support that," said Sanchez.

KQED also emphasizes the difference between the Wisconsin protests and those planned in California:

On the Capitol protest, it remains to be seen whether the comparison to the Wisconsin protests is a fair one. That month-long event was sparked by a proposal to change collective bargaining rights, a plan pushed by [the state's new governor](#), **Scott Walker**. [Emphasis in original.]

There's no such proposal here in Sacramento, but the images of protesters, often teachers, camping out in the marble hallways of Madison's statehouse could be appealing to those who believe California's budget battle is just as serious.

The Blaze reports that the CTA plans to pressure lawmakers on the tax extensions with a \$1 million budget and a [10-page plan](#) of action. [Hot Air's snapshot of the plan](#), as follows, effectively captures the essence of the bizarre nature of the plan:

- Target the businesses of legislators in their home districts.
- Circle the offices of "problem legislators." Target them with various actions.
- Picket/rally in front of legislators' offices/homes.
- Follow targeted legislators for the entire day.
- Have students and parents do informational picketing for one hour outside their school site.
- Have parents and students camp in front of schools all night.
- Have teachers being laid off contact parents and other CTA members.
- Make phone calls on Parents' Day. Call parents to tell them how their child is doing and then talk about the budget cuts and invite them to attend the rallies.
- Refrain from Shopping Day. Show the value of educators and other public employees and the



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economic contribution they make to local communities by refraining from shopping one day.

- Throw monopoly money in the toilet to show that all our money is going down the drain.
- Publish a list of companies that are not paying their fair share of taxes. Send letters to these companies and the media and picket their offices. Withdraw funds from banks that are not paying their fair share. [Editor's note: CTA is a tax-exempt organization.]
- One-day boycott of Microsoft and other corporations that are pushing failed education reform efforts.
- Turn fire/earthquake drill into crisis response drill to the budget cuts (involve students and the community)
- Attempt to close a major artery into town/cities
- Have celebrities involved in the demonstrations
- Dye hair red or wear red wigs
- Homeless encampments of students and teachers as they can afford a place to live
- Have people participate in a run across the state with a torch (like the Olympics)
- Statewide "A Day with No Teachers"
- Pay for everything with \$2 bills to show true impact of teachers
- "Lights Out Day" during the week where educators teach in the dark
- Protest at an MLB game. Everyone wears a matching shirt and sits in one section. Have scoreboard acknowledge their presence (i.e., "pink-slipped teachers seated in section ___")
- Work with organization like Ben & Jerry to have them create a labor-union flavored ice cream that can be sold at the rallies and in stores

A blogger for NBC's Bay Area affiliate [indicates](#) that the teachers' plan is a "waste of time" because it relies too heavily on the notion that the Capitol and legislature are of supreme importance. The blogger explains:

Fiscal decisions aren't made in the Capitol. Decisions on spending and taxation are made by formulas, laws and constitutional amendments that were long ago approved — mostly by voters themselves.

The budget is merely a formula of formulas. The legislature isn't worth protesting — or inconveniencing with a Capitol takeover — because they have so little power. Lawmakers act mostly as a clean-up crew for the fiscal messes created by previous voter decisions.

Constitutionally, legislators are janitors in California.

Although the blogger may be on to something, to the extent that the legislators are serving as "janitors" dealing with pre-programmed spending programs, they need to reclaim their authority as legislators. And Californians who want lower taxes and less government need to make their voices heard, though not via unsavory tactics such as harassment. Such tactics, which should be counter-productive for the protesters demanding tax extensions and a big education budget, are intended to intimidate and make life unbearable for the targeted legislators while also creating the appearance of popular support for their agenda.



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Photo of California teachers expressing solidarity with Wisconsin protesters: AP Images



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