

Prop A - School District Parcel Tax - Seeks Support

Sing Tao, 5/13/08

Representatives including members of the School Board, parents, and Chinese for Affirmative Action visited Sing Tao on Monday to seek for support of Proposition A, introduced by the School District.

Superintendent Carlos Garcia, through teleconferencing, emphasized that the \$198 tax placed on each taxable parcel is the lowest of its kind in all the school districts in the Bay Area. But the income from this tax will help provide critical support to the school district in attracting, recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and in improving the quality of education. Another consideration is that the property value of houses in school districts with good teachers and good education will continue to increase. Voters and homeowners making a small amount of investment now will help increase the value of their houses significantly in the future.

School Board members Norman Yee and Eric Mar said that the pay of teachers in the San Francisco Unified School District, particularly entry level teachers, is in general lower than other school districts, but San Francisco is the most expensive city in the Bay Area and in the nation. The School District has noticed that many passionate and capable teachers quit SFUSD after teaching two or three years when they have gained enough teaching experience. The primary reason is that the salary offered by the SFUSD cannot be compared with other school districts. Since there lacks State government and because Prop. 13 passed years ago requiring the State to fund public education, the financial situation of school districts has become direr. The school districts cannot provide better training for teachers, improve instructional quality, and many school districts in California are forced to increase the parcel tax to provide funding needed for public education.

About 30-40% of the students in the SF school district, from elementary to high schools, are Asian and mostly Chinese. Supporters of Proposition A therefore hope that this proposition will have the support of Chinese voters in San Francisco.

Parents Sandra Fewer, Cindy Choy, and CAA representative Christina Wong, who visited Sing Tao with the School Board members, agreed on the importance of Proposition A for improving the quality of public education. Choy said that her daughter studies at a not very well-known elementary school. Sometime ago they had a teacher from Texas who was very good and was very well liked by both students and parents. But after one year, she had to go to teach at another school district because the low salary could not support her family. Parents and students felt helpless and missed her. It is this personal experience that makes her, as a parent and a homeowner, want to understand and support Proposition A.

If Proposition A is passed at the June Election, it will provide the school district with \$28 million every year. The income will help raise entry level teachers' salary to the same level of school districts in the Bay Area, provide better job training for teachers, motivate teachers to teach at poor performance schools, and set up support groups allowing senior teachers to mentor new teachers.

Nevertheless, passage of Proposition A requires 2/3 of the votes. It is hard. Therefore it is necessary to mobilize all the San Francisco voters to cast a support vote on June 3 or with their absentee ballots.