

# California Democrat sponsors bill to expedite teacher removal

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As part of the assault on public teachers, California Democratic state senator Lou Correa has unveiled a new bill to expedite the firing of primary and secondary school teachers. The move comes just months after the veto of Assembly Bill 375 and the initial filing of the lawsuit, *Beatriz Vergara, et al. v. State of California*, both of which aim to undermine teacher protections.

At a press conference on February 26, Correa presented a list of examples of recent teacher misconduct to argue that this bill's focus is on those teachers who commit "heinous acts." The aim is to focus attention on recent cases of alleged teacher misconduct to garner support for the bill. Correa's own comments and the bill's proposals, however, demonstrate that this is a pretext for a ruthless attack on teachers as a whole.

Correa commented that "our current process to dismiss such predators in the classroom is usually bogged down by complex requirements that are unfair to the victim and the public.... Yes, let's keep due process but let's not forget the victims, the children."

Furthermore, Correa admits that "this bill streamlines the dismissal process...by making that process more efficient, less time consuming and less expensive." The emphasis on cases of "egregious misconduct" is aimed at drawing attention away from provisions aimed at all teachers.

Current legislation requires that a written notice be submitted to an accused teacher. After this, teachers have 45 days for unprofessional conduct or 90 days for unsatisfactory performance before the governing school board can file an official grievance. The bill would reduce the requirement to 30 days. Because "unprofessional conduct" and "unsatisfactory performance" are left to the discretion of the district, those teachers who do not have the resources to meet

the district's and state's "standards," or do not toe either of their lines, are all the more easy to fire.

Correa was not alone in crafting this legislation. He has received support from the California School Boards Association (CSBA). The bill picks up where the Democratic-sponsored proposal of Joan Buchanan left off.

Initiated with similar reasoning, Buchanan's bill, AB 375, laid the basis for the current proposal. California governor Jerry Brown, however, argued that the previous legislation did not go far enough. In explaining his veto, Brown claimed that the process was still "too rigid." He further justified his action by writing, "I share the author's desire to streamline the teacher discipline process, but this bill is an imperfect solution."

Conspicuously absent from any statewide discussion are the unions. The California Teachers Association (CTA) has said it is "reviewing the bill." Its previous support for AB 375 suggests that it will likely support this one. Nine of Correa's 10 largest supporters were unions, including the AFL-CIO, the National Education Association and the California School Employee Association, yet none of these unions has responded to his proposed measure.

Using the same tactics of Correa transferred to the courtroom, billionaire David Welch, via his nonprofit organization *Students Matter*, has financially sponsored a number of children to carry out a lawsuit against the State of California to expedite the process for teacher removal. In the *Vergara* case, the plaintiffs allege that concentrated areas of low-income earners and minorities are disproportionately affected by "ineffective" teachers and are therefore prohibited from achieving a constitutionally granted education.

Masked in democratic rhetoric, a ruling in favor of

*Vergara, et al.* will only intensify the attacks on teachers and quicken the dismissal process. This case has received national coverage and support, including from President Obama himself. The assault on permanent employment is part and parcel of the federal “education reform” efforts.

Guaranteeing districts easier channels for teacher removal opens the door for “more competition” with charter schools. If districts are not “competitive” enough with charter schools, or if senior teachers are too expensive, district officials can turn to teachers to blame for the budgetary crisis, a “failing education program” and a host of other social problems. Because “education reform” is a “growing market,” investors like Welch seek a favorable playing field to open schools and dismiss teachers on a whim.



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