

**September, 2013  
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# DAVIS DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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## **California Education Update by State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson**

When I took office as State Superintendent of Public Instruction in January 2011, our schools were in the midst of suffering from several years of devastating budget cuts forced by the economic crisis. To focus attention on this dire situation, I declared during my first week in office that our schools faced a state of fiscal emergency. We have dropped to 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation in per pupil spending. We had to reverse this awful trend.

I believed based on my experience as a teacher and coach that voters would respond to an action plan to support our students. That's why I asked my Transition Advisory Team to develop the *Blueprint for Great Schools* (which you can download at [www.tomtorlakson.com/blueprint](http://www.tomtorlakson.com/blueprint)). The *Blueprint* emphasizes research-backed ideas that focus on the whole child, teach our students 21st century skills, and seek to ensure every classroom has an excellent teacher and every school has an outstanding principal.

Thanks to voters' support of Propositions 30 and 39 in 2012—and the improving economy—we've started to invest in our schools again. But we have much more work to do to ensure every one of California's 6.2 million students can enjoy a world-class education.

That's why my team is continuing to work to make the *Blueprint for Great Schools* come to life for our students. We want to rebuild our public schools so they return to the top ranks in our nation.

To achieve these results, I have been implementing the key findings included in the *Blueprint*. My Education Technology Task Force has outlined a plan to ensure every student has access to an internet-connected device before, during, and after the school day—something I like to call *No Child Left Offline*. I've also engaged with leaders throughout the state to produce plans to restore STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programs and Career Technical Education programs to our schools.

I have called for a Renaissance in arts education and have partnered with the California Arts Council, County Superintendents, and the California Alliance for Arts Education to meet this challenge through the CREATE (Core Reforms Engaging Arts to Educate) CA coalition.

We are focusing on the whole child through my Team California for Healthy Kids initiative, which works to ensure our students have access to healthy food, clean water, and physical activity during and after school. My team is also taking the lead with other agencies to help implement the Affordable Care Act and ensure all of eligible students and families take advantage of these benefits.

I brought together an Educator Excellence Task Force to develop the most comprehensive examination of California's teaching profession in a generation. This team published *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State*, and we are working with the legislature and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to put those ideas into action.

Because the safety of our students is critical, I am leading efforts to ensure our schools are safe, that school personnel follow their duties as mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect, and I have pushed for policies to reduce the dropout rate and prevent chronic absenteeism.

We must also continue to work to ensure a successful transition to the Common Core State Standards. Based on a recommendation I made, the Legislature and Governor just invested \$1.25 billion in the helping our teachers and schools prepare for the Common Core. We have even more work to do.

These are exciting times for education. I've seen some remarkable achievements as I've traveled the state visiting schools and meeting with parents, teachers, and community leaders. I thank you for this opportunity to lead our schools and restore them to the top ranks in the nation. You can keep up on our work at [www.TomTorlakson.com](http://www.TomTorlakson.com), [www.facebook.com/TomTorlakson](http://www.facebook.com/TomTorlakson), and on twitter at @TomTorlakson. Please share your ideas and join the conversation! (Photo r.-l. John Chendo, Mae Cendaña & Tom Torlakson and Lois Wolk)



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## Calendar of Events & Campaign Activities

**Tuesday, September 3, 7:30 pm regular DDC Board business meeting.** Club members and the public are welcome; Pres. Sen and Secretary Yamagata draft the agenda. Davis Library on 14th Street.

**Sunday, September 15, 5:00-8:00 pm. The Yolo County Democratic Bean Feed** (actually a great tri-tip!), Look for a surprise guest, who personalizes the event theme, Fighting for Justice. Confirmed guests will include Representatives Garamendi and Matsui, Senator Wolk, Assemblymember Yamada and other local leaders. Veterans Memorial Hall, Davis.

### **Party Outreach at the Yolo County Fair** by Carl Schmid

As in previous years, the Yolo County Democratic Central Committee sponsored a booth at the County Fair. However this year, YCDCC made better use of this opportunity by using a slightly different approach. In addition to having elected officials and local Clubs greet the public, the County Party used its new internship program to register voters (see p. 3) and invited the Brady Campaign to join us in promoting gun safety legislation (bottom photo).

The DDC's shift at the Fair booth was on a hot Saturday with relatively sparse attendance. Nonetheless, the interns, Joshua Copitch and Apurva Behal, were busy registering voters. During the week, fifty-four new Democrats were registered exceeding our goal of fifty registrations. Tom Hagler, Naomi Williams and Jan Agee represented the Brady Campaign, which obtained forty-five signatures from fairgoers urging the Governor to approve the package of gun safety legislation that is arriving on his desk.

Our Club's much used, cardboard cutouts of Michelle and Barack Obama still manage to draw interest by serving as a backdrop for family photos. (The cardboard Obamas, who have attended perhaps fifty such events over the years now look sadly shopworn.) Senator Lois Wolk, Councilmember Dan Wolk and school Trustee Sheila Allen joined Club members (Tim Fenton, Bob Bockwinkel, Rick Gonzales, Ameer Alsawaf, and Luba and Carl Schmid) in distributing information and helping bring traffic to the gun safety campaign and voter registration drive. Despite the low attendance in a non election year, much was accomplished



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*Pipeline for Young Democrats in Yolo County*

by Chris Selim & Maxine Sara



The Democratic Central Committee Coalition kicks off *The Coalition Empowerment Project*, a grassroots field program developed for the following 4 counties:

Yolo, Sutter, Yuba & Solano, with the goal of empowering young people and promoting civic engagement through the implementation of a Democratic Central Committee Internship Program.

In Yolo County, ten college students have been committing 15 hours per week to learn and develop skills in community organizing, voter registration and political engagement. Interns have hosted voter registration events, participated in political meetings and completed research projects on key issues for the 2014 midterm election.

*"The Coalition Empowerment Project is about young people strengthening their voice in politics. With so many important issues at stake such as the environment and affordable education, it is an imperative for us to have a voice in our government. But it all starts with us,"* says Maxine Sarai, Field Organizer for the Yolo County Democratic Central Committee.

The principal goal of the Coalition Empowerment Project is: 1) to create a pipeline of young people for Democratic & Labor politics, 2) to increase civic engagement within the Latino community and 3) to implement a field program based upon the best practices of the Obama campaign, the Garamendi for Congress campaign and the Labor movement. The program will host weekly training sessions, featuring guest speakers from the CA Democratic Party including: Carlos Alcalá (Chair of the Chicano Latino Caucus) and Bob Schelen (Co-Chair of the Voter Registration Caucus).

Thus far, the Coalition Internship Program in Yolo County hosted three training sessions, completed four organizational development assignments, and planned five successful voter registration events – registering over 100 new Democratic voters. The Yolo County Coalition Interns will also be supporting the Central Committee's efforts at the Yolo County Fair and their annual Bean Feed fundraiser.

The Coalition Empowerment Project is a program organized by the Democratic Central Committee Coalition, a collaborative effort between 4 Democratic Central Committees (Yolo, Yuba, Solano & Sutter Counties) committed to: 1) building the capacity of our local Democratic Party, 2) strengthening partnerships with the Latino community and Labor movement and 3) registering new Democratic voters.

For more information please contact Chris Selim at (408) 829-6109.

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