

Statement on class size and the penny sales tax March 30, 2009

Florida PTA, Public Relations & Communications

After our rally on March 18, 2009, there have been many newspaper articles and letters to the editors regarding PTAs position on class size and the penny sales tax proposed by FEA. Below is our official position on these two very important issues.

Class Size

Regarding the class size issue, Florida PTA has a class size statement which became a position statement in 1994 which states; Florida PTA urges the legislature to phase in maximum class size standards lower than those mandated by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) by the year 1999 and to establish class size standards for Exceptional Student Education classes; and The Florida PTA urges the legislature to fully fund the capital, personnel and operational cost necessary to decrease or maintain class sizes under these levels.

National PTA supports class size reduction proposals that consider actual class size, meaning the number of students in a teacher's room for whom that teacher is accountable, rather than pupil/teacher ratios, which do not accurately reflect teachers' contacts with children. National PTA recognizes that class size reduction efforts will require a significant financial commitment for recruiting, hiring, and training qualified teachers, and increased school facilities. However, this investment will be offset in the long term by the money saved when the economic and social costs associated with grade retention and dropping out of school are reduced.

Florida PTA opposes HJR 919 and SB1828 which propose to amend the constitution by calculating class size by school wide averages rather than the actual number of students in every classroom. PTA 's position is that class size reduction proposals should be based on actual class size, the number of students in each classroom for whom the teacher is accountable, rather than ratios and averages, which do not accurately reflect the actual number of pupils in each classroom.

Penny Sales Tax

The issue of the penny sales tax is getting a lot of attention and Florida PTA has been linked with the Florida Educators Association (FEA). The Florida PTA currently does not have a position that specifically addresses sales tax proposals for individuals. Therefore we are not supporting (or opposing) the current proposal to raise sales taxes for 3 years.

PTA has long advocated for a reform of the tax structure to provide a stable and adequate source of funding for education and all children's services. We continue to ask the legislature to close existing loopholes and review all tax exemptions and retain

only those exemptions that are proven necessary and meet an overriding public policy interest.

We do have two position statements which speak on the tax structures. The first is Taxes-Comprehensive Revenue Restructuring (1991) which states The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to implement a comprehensive restructuring of Florida's tax system with the goals of guaranteeing stable and adequate funding of public schools and necessary services for children.

The other position statement is from 1997 Florida Tax Structure stating the Florida PTA urges the legislature to increase tax revenue through tax structure reform and order to adequately fund services necessary to meet the educational, health, safety, recreational and other basic needs of Florida's children.

The Florida PTA urges immediate reform of Florida's system of sales and use taxes. Exemptions for products and services should be retained only where they meet an overriding public policy interest.

For these and other Florida PTA position statements, go to www.floridapta.org.