

FROM: THE CALIFORNIA FACULTY ASSOCIATION
cfa@calfac.org - <http://www.calfac.org>

CFA HEADLINES

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AB 656 HALTED BY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

On Thursday, the Assembly Appropriations Committee took action on CFA-sponsored Assembly Bill 656 that essentially defeats the bill for this legislative cycle.

The committee deleted the oil and gas severance tax portion of the bill earmarked for public higher education and replaced it with a simple reporting requirement. The amendments require the state Board of Equalization to annually report to the legislature the amount of revenue that would be generated for public higher education if the oil and gas tax was implemented.

The inability to garner a two-thirds vote that would have been required for Assembly passage – only possible with the support of Assembly Republicans – coupled with the bill's potential costs to the state general fund, directly led to this outcome.

When AB 656, authored by Assembly Majority Leader Alberto Torrico, was first introduced, CFA understood efforts to enact this bill would be a multi-year process.

CFA leaders expressed disappointment that the bill was not approved as originally proposed, but stressed how critical the months of lobbying and grassroots efforts by faculty, students and community members in supporting this measure were to influencing state policymakers about the need to fund public higher education.

The dialogue created by this collective action was instrumental in the Governor's decision to increase the CSU budget by at least \$305 million in his January budget proposal.

"Many in the legislature didn't expect us to move AB 656 as far as we did," stated CFA President Lillian Taiz. "We have not given up on our efforts to provide a stable source of funding for the CSU, and will continue to forcefully and effectively pursue avenues that will provide us these needed funds."

Taiz added, "AB 656, coupled with our years of efforts to inform the public about the problems facing CSU, has placed higher education at the forefront of the state's concerns. We will continue our efforts to ensure the long term health of the CSU is not sacrificed in the name of short-term economic expediency."

CFA is continuing legislative efforts to provide oversight and accountability of the \$1.34 billion in hidden funds held by CSU campus auxiliaries and foundations. The bi-partisan SB 330, authored by Senator Leland Yee - a reintroduction of last year's SB 218 - was unanimously approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee and is awaiting a vote by the full Senate next week.

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