



Dear Linda ,

Districts Face Questions in Spending Long-term Bonds for Short-Lived Technology

Dec. 17, 2012 | By John Fensterwald | www.edsource.org

EXCERPT: Is it legal to buy personal computers for students using school construction bonds? And if it's legal, is it wise to pay interest long-term on devices with a short shelf life?

Last month, the Bond Oversight Committee for Los Angeles Unified balked at endorsing Superintendent John Deasy's plan to buy tablet computers with bonds intended primarily for building and renovating schools. In doing so, the Committee raised questions that other school districts also should be asking.

There's no unqualified answer to the questions that the Bond Oversight Committee asked, and school districts like San Diego Unified and Riverside Unified have come to opposite conclusions. What all agree on, however, is that the state needs to provide legal clarity and, most importantly, dollars.

... There's no disagreement that school bond funds can be used to upgrade wiring, install wireless receivers and pay for computer management systems. Bonds can also be used to train system managers. But laptops, tablets and netbooks - devices that cost anywhere from \$200 to \$800 - are a different matter. Unless the financing is structured carefully, taxpayers could end up paying interest on 25- or 30-year bonds used to buy devices that only last a few years.

The average life of an asset, whether a building or furniture, should match the length of financing as a rule of thumb. ...

... One problem is that law and interpretations of it haven't kept up with technology. A state attorney general's opinion from 1963 said that districts could use bond funds to stock a new school's library but not to buy replacement volumes. In the 1990s, the attorney general's office took the position that districts couldn't use bond funding to buy textbooks. Two decades later the comparable question is, are netbooks more analogous to library books or textbooks? And, as learning shifts to the Internet and takes place 24/7, shouldn't students be able to take home equipment that's integral to learning? Rubin, English and others say it's important for the attorney general and the Legislature to clarify the conditions under which districts can use bond money on technology. ...

To read the complete article please visit: www.edsource.org/today/2012/districts-face-questions-in-spending-long-term-bonds-for-short-lived-technology/24034

San Diego County - Pay-to-Play

Grand Jury Indicts New Defendants in South County Corruption Probe

Dec. 27. 2012 | Wendy Fry & Sarah Grieco | www.nbcsandiego.com

EXCERPT: A Grand Jury returned indictments for a few school administrators and key players in the Sweetwater Unified School Board scandal on Friday, according to one of the defendant's attorneys.

The Grand Jury began meeting in early November in a major "pay-to-play" public corruption case.

Prosecutors say the school officials traded their votes on multi-million dollar construction contracts for gifts and other favors.

A notice letter issued to former Sweetwater Superintendent Jesus Gandara states the Grand Jury has filed 22 counts of felony crimes, and eight misdemeanors against the defendant, who has already pleaded not guilty to some of the charges.

According to court documents, the felony crimes against Gandara issued this week include extortion, receiving a bribe, conspiracy to commit a crime, perjury by declaration and conspiracy to defraud another of property.

Gandara's defense attorney, Paul Pfingst, said he was not surprised about the indictments. "We were anticipating an indictment with the possibility of new defendants being added," Pfingst said.

Current board members Bertha Lopez and Jim Cartmill are among those named in the indictment and the San Ysidro schools superintendent Manuel Paul, two separate law enforcement sources told NBC 7 San Diego.

As NBC 7 Investigates first reported in August, Paul said in a June 20 deposition that he accepted \$2,500 in cash from a contractor in 2010 in a Chula Vista parking lot. The cash exchange came to light as part of a lawsuit between a former contractor, Art Castañares, and the San Ysidro School District. ...

To read the complete article please visit: www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/sweetwater-san-ysidro-indictment-san-diego-185077431.html

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CalBOC Board

Meeting Schedule:

February 8, 2013

May 10, 2013

August 9, 2013

November 15, 2013

Mission Statement

To promote school district accountability by improving the training and resources available to California's Proposition 39 School Bond Oversight Committees and educating the state legislature, local school boards and the public about the oversight and reporting powers these Citizens' Bond Oversight Committees (CBOCs) have, and to advocate on a state level, where appropriate, on issues of common concern to all CBOCs.

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Operation Standards

CBOC Best Practices

This 9 page document provides a basis for CBOCs to do a self-assessment of their operations and identify training needs.

1. Legally Required
2. Best Practices
3. Local Requirements

calboc.org/docs/BestPractices_5.09.pdf

Reviewing Financial & Performance Audits

It is the responsibility of members of CBOCs to alert the public to any waste or improper expenditure of bond money. The 3 page PDF covers:

1. Accountability requirements
2. Understanding the audit
3. Sample questions to ask

PerformanceAudits.pdf