

Legislative Summit Tackles Education

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FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS Saturday the County Office of Education is hosting a Legislative Summit on Education. The purpose is to gather people from all sides of the education debate in one place and hash out ideas on legislation that would improve schools. State Senator Henry Mello and Assemblyman Bruce McPherson will attend.

The Office of Education lists three objectives for the summit:

(1) to give participants an overview of the Education Code, funding mechanisms and educational advocacy as they pertain to proposals for legislation; (2) to develop legislative priorities from each of the committees to be presented to area legislators at a future meeting; and (3) to acquaint participants with points of access available to community members wishing to involve themselves in affecting change in the educational process.

Topics that could arise during the day-long summit include a zero-tolerance law towards guns, requiring uniforms at schools, and the state's standardized testing system, said Jim Maxwell, assistant superintendent for business and personnel services.

Currently, individual school dis-

tricts in California have the authority to institute policies such as a zero-tolerance zone or a dress code. Zero-tolerance zones are meant to curb the proliferation of violence in schools by allowing school officials to immediately expel students caught with guns on campus. In requiring uniforms, educators are attempting to reduce peer pressure at the junior high and high school level toward students "out-dressing" each other. Uniforms are also intended to prevent students from wearing gang colors and clothing while at school. Some believe a zero-tolerance law and a dress code should exist at the state level, meaning all school districts must comply.

Governor Pete Wilson incurred the wrath of many educators when he vetoed legislation rewriting the standardized testing system in public schools this year. The religious right objected to the wording in the tests, and so, apparently, did Wilson.

With potentially divisive issues such as these, it will be no surprise if debate at the summit gets a little heated. The important thing, though, is that there is debate.

"This is all about getting people involved in education," Maxwell said.

— Matt Davidson

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