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EDITORIAL  
READERS' OPEN FORUM

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RESPECT FOR SCHOOL CUSTODIANS

\* In the April 7 "Lack of respect issue in talks" about the San Bernardino City Unified School District's talks with substitute teachers. (Substitute representative) Pat Johnson refers to the custodians as "the guys taking out the trash and cleaning the toilets" in a comparison to substitute teachers and their pay status. Johnson said it in a way that I felt was degrading to the custodians. If Johnson thinks that that is all custodians do, I would like to educate her a little.

Yes, we take out the trash, sometimes hundreds of pounds on a daily basis, and it is separated for recycling. Yes, we clean toilets, and we use many different chemicals that can be dangerous and even deadly if not used properly. It is not like cleaning your toilet at home. We clean facilities that are used by thousands of students daily, and we have to be aware of blood-borne pathogens such as HIV and HBV that custodians are in danger of coming into contact with daily, and we are trained to take precautions.

In the years that I have been a custodian, I have helped coach a girl's softball team at the elementary school where I was the custodian. I was also a volunteer for the Rolling Readers, I read to classes, and I also tutored individual students who needed help to improve their reading skills.

The job of a custodian consists of more than being the "Tidy Bowl Man" or being the drone that only knows basic skills, such as dumping a wastebasket. Our school district sees us as a valuable resource and thankfully treats us as such.

I agree that substitute teachers are a valuable resource to our school district also, and things should be better for them. I disagree with disrespecting an entire group of people to gain more respect or momentum for your own cause.

JIMMY CARDINAL San Bernardino

Schools best run at local level

\* The same governor who identified his top three priorities as "education, education, and education" during his first campaign, is now responsible, through budget mismanagement, for the impending teacher layoffs.

People who responded to the much-publicized teacher shortage and left other careers or changed their course of study in college to ensure that our children received a good education now find themselves without a job because of a lack of seniority. When are we going to learn that government is more efficient and accountable when administered at the local level?

Because the education system is administered by bureaucrats in Sacramento, our children's future is compromised by shifting priorities, financial bungling and political ambition.

JOE LICK Riverside

Time for a national sales tax

\* OK, enough already -- taxes on incomes are too high. Both California and the federal governments are broke. They spent the capital gains tax bonanza of the '90s and expected it to be there forever. They grew their spending at a rate far higher than the economy could support.

Now they blame the taxpayer for not paying enough income taxes and point to polls that support no tax cuts. California even wants to raise taxes, go figure?

Sure the polls reflect that over 50 percent of those polled want no tax cuts and even support an increase on the rich (income over \$60,000 per family). Guess what? Around 50 percent of the people do not pay income tax, I mean zero, zip, nada. In fact they might just get a check from one or more federal welfare programs.

A national sales tax will make everyone pay their fair share and give the governments a stable tax base to budget. Sales tax revenues increase year to year at a predictable rate.

LOCK PIATT Meniffee

Profiting from patriotism

\* Today someone placed an American flag on my lawn and on the lawns of everyone on my block. At first I was pleased by what I took to be a very nice and appropriate gesture. However, I later discovered a business card attached (from a real estate agent).