



BOARD COMMUNICATIONS - JANUARY 30, 2026

TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

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Tami Lundberg, Chief Officer

Board Communications Approved by:
Mao Misty Her, Superintendent



Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

Date: January 30, 2026
Phone Number: (559) 457-3884

Regarding: Superintendent Calendar Highlights

The purpose of this communication is to inform the Board of notable calendar items:

- Presented at New Employees Orientation
- Attended Principal's Meeting
- Attended the Women Leading Ed Event *Krause v. Kelehan and its Impact*
- Participated in call with Urban Superintendents to discuss the Governor's budget and areas of interest for joint advocacy
- Met with Cabinet Team
- Attended the Central Valley Community Foundation Governance Meeting
- Attended the Central Valley Community Foundation Review Committee Meeting
- Visited the Fresno Unified Spelling Bee
- Site visit at Fresno High School
- Attended Duncan 4.0 Celebration
- Attended Labor Management Partnership Meeting
- Attended meeting at The Fresno Center with Congressman Jim Costa to discuss ICE and immigration updates with the Hmong Community

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Misty Her at (559) 457-3884.

Cabinet Approval: 

Name and Title: Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive

Date: January 30, 2026
Phone Number: (559) 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Reports for January 23, 2026

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board a copy of School Services of California's (SSC) Weekly Updates. Each week SSC provides an update and commentary on different educational fiscal issues. In addition, they include different articles related to education issues. The SSC Weekly Updates for January 23, 2026, are attached and include the following articles:

- Employee Long-Term Leave Entitlements – January 20, 2026
- Fearing Deficits, California Senators Ask Gavin Newsom for Budget Transparency – January 22, 2026
- Trump Administration Sues California Over Law Keeping Oil Wells from Homes, Schools – January 15, 2026

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at (559) 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval: 
Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer



500 Capitol Mall

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Suite 1700

•
Sacramento

•
California 95814

•
TEL: 916 . 446 . 7517

•
FAX: 916 . 446 . 2011

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www.sscal.com

DATE: January 23, 2026

TO: Misty Her
Superintendent

AT: Fresno Unified School District

FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team

RE: ***SSC's Sacramento Weekly Update***

LAO Presents at Assembly and Senate Budget Committees

This week both the full Assembly and Senate Budget Committees held their budget overview hearings on Governor Gavin Newsom's 2026-27 State Budget proposal. The Department of Finance provided a high-level overview of the proposal, which was followed by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), the Legislature's nonpartisan policy and fiscal advisor, giving its analysis of the Governor's Budget proposal.

The LAO finds that the budget appears roughly balanced largely because the Administration assumes significantly higher revenues than previously projected, including an approximately \$42 billion upgrade to revenue estimates relative to the Enacted Budget baseline, driven by strong income tax collections and continued economic strength.

However, the LAO emphasizes that these revenue assumptions are closely tied to stock market performance and carry downside risk, and that structural deficits persist even amid revenue growth, which is a pattern the Governor's proposal does not materially address. The LAO also highlights that new discretionary spending proposals and constitutional spending requirements erode some of the apparent budget improvement and will require future attention. Because of these long-term pressures, the LAO suggests the Legislature consider adopting its own revenue forecast and more cautious fiscal assumptions as it evaluates the Governor's plan and recommends early legislative engagement on structural budget challenges rather than waiting until later in the budget cycle.

The LAO's testimony and accompanying [document](#) produces real questions for the Legislature to consider as they begin to vet the Governor's Budget proposal, including:

- Should the Legislature adopt its own revenue outlook (e.g., LAO's more conservative forecast) or rely on the Governor's estimates?

- How much risk is acceptable in structuring ongoing education commitments (ongoing programs vs. one-time funds)?
- Given structural deficits, what sustainable funding strategies should the Legislature explore for TK-12?
- How should the Legislature balance the constitutional requirement of the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee with other non-Proposition 98 budget demands (healthcare, safety net) when long-term projections are uncertain?
- How do proposed governance changes impact legislative oversight of TK-12 education?

Now that both houses have had their State Budget overview hearings, the Assembly and Senate budget committees will split their work into the budget subcommittees, where they will dive deeper into the details of the State Budget over the course of a number of hearings.

The Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance and the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education are the two subcommittees tasked with vetting the education issues in the State Budget. These subcommittees should begin to meet within the next several weeks and will hold hearings throughout the spring on the various education issues in the proposed State Budget.

Leilani Aguinaldo

Employee Long-Term Leave Entitlements

By Danyel Conolley and Sarah Niemann, EdD
School Services of California Inc.'s *Fiscal Report*
January 20, 2026

Employee leave management in local educational agencies (LEAs) is complicated for various reasons. There are numerous leave categories available for LEA employees. The intersect of state and federal leave, Education Code entitlements, local board policy, and collective bargaining agreements make employee leave difficult to untangle. However, long-term leave for certificated and classified LEA employees is typically the area where human resources staff work to develop their capacity due to the complexities involved with accurate tracking and calculation of the dock in pay. We provide statutory entitlements for long-term leave to help with the untangling process.

Extended Illness Leave—Certificated Employees

Per [Education Code \(EC §\) 44977](#) certificated employees who are absent due to illness or injury are eligible for differential pay for a period of up to five school months (excluding summers and off-track periods). This leave runs consecutively with accrued sick leave, and the five-month calculation begins after accrued leave is exhausted. Employees are provided one five-month period per illness or accident—the employee may carry over the balance of the five-month period in the subsequent school year.

The docking rules for certificated employees are covered in EC § 44977(d) and the amount paid to a substitute employee during any month shall be less than the salary due to the employee absent from duty.

Differential and Extended Illness Leave—Classified Employees

[EC § 45196](#) provides two types of extended illness leave for classified employees and allows LEAs to adopt an alternative to differential pay leave which can be established through collective bargaining. Differential pay, or the five-month calculation, prescribes that the dock in pay is the difference between the absent employee's salary and the amount paid to a substitute employee to fill the absence. If there is no actual substitute employee covering the absence, the employee is not docked and receives full pay. The alternative docking method for classified employees is the 100-day rule, which is 100 working days each year at not less than 50% of the employee's salary. If the 100 days are not exhausted within the fiscal year, the leave entitlement resets at the start of the year.

We have only brushed the surface of this topic, and it is critical that LEAs understand not only statutory leave entitlements, but also the local rules embedded in collective bargaining agreements and board policy that govern how long-term leave is implemented in practice. Because employee leave is a form of compensation, it must be managed through clear, consistent processes that reflect strong internal controls, accurate tracking, and accountability. We will explore leave tracking, calculations, and implementation considerations in greater depth during our upcoming Employee Leave webinar. For additional information on topics covered and registration details, please click [here](#).

Note: A bipartisan group of state senators on Wednesday expressed alarm about budget deficits California is expected to face in upcoming years and called on Governor Newsom's Administration to be more transparent with its spending plans.

Fearing Deficits, California Senators Ask Gavin Newsom for Budget Transparency

By Stephen Hobbs
The Sacramento Bee
January 22, 2026

A bipartisan group of state senators on Wednesday expressed alarm about budget deficits California is expected to face in upcoming years and called on Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration to be more transparent with its spending plans.

"It's simply an irresponsible position to be putting ourselves in," state Sen. Catherine Blakespear, D-Encinitas, said about the upcoming shortfalls. "And it does expose us to tremendous risks in the event and likelihood that we do have a downturn in our economy."

Both the Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst's Office, which advises the Legislature on fiscal and policy matters, predict the state will need to deal with deficits in upcoming years.

That is despite a surge in tax revenue due to the continued rise of the stock market, largely driven by enthusiasm about the prospects of artificial intelligence.

Earlier this month, Newsom's administration released a proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year that estimated a nearly \$2.9 billion deficit that does not include major cuts or new spending.

Erika Li, a top budget official at the finance department, told senators in a hearing the administration wanted to work with the Legislature before releasing a more specific spending plan in May.

"Our intent is to have robust conversations and to have them soon," Li said.

State Sen. Christopher Cabaldon, D-West Sacramento, said he hoped those conversations would not just happen in secret.

"This is not a year to say, 'Hey, let's take the closed-door negotiations of the final two weeks and let's have closed-door negotiations for five months,' " he said to Li. "That is not the outcome, that's not the standard we should be setting."

State Sen. Eloise Gómez Reyes, D-Colton, was also direct in her comments to Li: "We cannot wait until May."

The Legislature has until June 15 to pass a budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1. Although legislators can pass updated ones after meeting that deadline.

State Sen. Roger Niello, R-Fair Oaks, said to Li the lack of specifics in the January budget makes it more challenging for the committee to do its work before the deadline. The group plans to hold many hearings on specific aspects of the state's spending plan, which could see significant changes.

"Why are we analyzing a budget that isn't complete?" Niello asked. "That's, I have to say, a little bit frustrating."

Note: The Trump Administration is suing California over a law that creates a 3,200-foot buffer zone between new oil and gas wells and homes, schools, hospitals, and parks.

Trump Administration Sues California Over Law Keeping Oil Wells from Homes, Schools

By Hayley Smith
Los Angeles Times
January 15, 2026

California communities and environmental justice groups worked for years to win a law to prevent new oil and gas wells from being drilled near where people live, work and gather. Now, the Trump administration is suing to overturn it.

In a lawsuit filed Wednesday in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, the U.S. Department of Justice challenged Senate Bill 1137, state legislation passed in 2022 that establishes a 3,200-foot minimum setback between new oil wells and "sensitive receptors," defined as homes, schools, community centers, parks and playgrounds, healthcare facilities or any public building.

Under the law, existing wells that are close to these places can continue to operate, but must monitor emissions, control their dust and limit nighttime noise and light.

But the Trump administration says the law would "knock out" about one-third of all federally authorized oil and gas leases in California, amounting to unconstitutional state regulation of federal lands. In its complaint, the administration argues that federal law — specifically, the Mineral Leasing Act and the Federal Land and Policy Management Act — supersedes SB 1137, and asks that the court declare the state law unconstitutional and prevent it from being enforced.

While the majority of active wells in California are on private and state lands, the federal Bureau of Land Management administers more than 600 oil and gas leases within the state, according to the lawsuit. About 218 of those leases overlap with the buffer zones established by the law.

Officials with Gov. Gavin Newsom's office said Thursday they had not yet been served with the lawsuit, but would defend SB 1137 and the health of California communities. Living near oil and gas wells has been linked to a range of adverse health issues stemming from air and water pollution that can be released by drilling and production, especially if a well is leaking badly.

"The Trump administration just sued California for keeping oil wells away from elementary schools, homes, daycares, hospitals, and parks," said Anthony Martinez, a spokesman for the governor. "Think about that."

SB 1137 creates a science-based buffer zone so kids can go to school, families can live in their homes, and communities can exist without breathing toxic fumes that cause asthma, birth defects, and cancer.”

The lawsuit advances an April executive order issued by President Trump titled “Protecting American Energy from State Overreach,” in which the president directed Atty. Gen. Pam Bondi to identify “burdensome and ideologically motivated” state and local regulations that threaten the development of domestic energy resources and take action to stop them.

“This is yet another unconstitutional and radical policy from Gavin Newsom that threatens our country’s energy independence and makes energy more expensive for the American people,” Bondi said in a statement. “In accordance with President Trump’s executive orders, this Department of Justice will continue to fight burdensome regulations that violate federal law and hamper domestic energy production — especially in California, where Newsom is clearly intent on subverting federal law at every opportunity.”

Environmental groups were quick to condemn the action. The oil and gas setback law was hard won after multiple earlier attempts were stymied by opposition from the petroleum industry and trade unions. Its implementation was briefly paused by a 2024 referendum effort led by the California Independent Petroleum Assn., which ultimately withdrew it in light of a groundswell of public resistance.

“Attempting to block the law that protects the air we breathe and the water we drink from oil industry pollution is the Trump administration’s latest attack on our state,” said Kassie Siegel, director of the Climate Law Institute at the nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity. “Big Oil backed down from their deceitful referendum campaign because Californians wouldn’t stand for it. This is a last-ditch attempt to overturn the law’s critical health protections. I’m confident this historic law will stand.”

Rock Zierman, chief executive of the California Independent Petroleum Assn., lauded the Trump administration’s challenge against what it described as an “arbitrary setback law.”

“Just as the state has tried to shut down duly permitted in-state production on private land in violation of the fifth amendment of the U.S. Constitution, so too has the state tried to usurp federal law by shutting down production of minerals owned by the U.S. taxpayers,” Zierman said in a statement Thursday. “We welcome the U.S. Department of Justice joining our fight against these illegal actions that are leading to increased foreign imports.”

The suit marks an escalation of Trump’s battle against Newsom and California over energy and environmental policies. The president, who received substantial donations from oil and gas companies during his 2024 presidential campaign, has moved to block the state’s tailpipe emission standards, clean vehicle targets and renewable energy projects, among other efforts.

Earlier this week, the Justice Department filed another lawsuit against two California cities, Petaluma and Morgan Hill, over ordinances that ban the use of natural gas in new buildings. Both cities said they have not enforced those bans in several years.

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Ashlee Chiarito, Ed.D., Executive Officer

Date: January 30, 2026
Phone Number: (559) 457-3934

Regarding: Federal Program Monitoring-Conclusion

The purpose of this communication is to update the Board of the most recent Federal Program Monitoring (FPM) review which concluded on January 23, 2026.

As previously communicated to the Board on October 03, 2025, the California Department of Education (CDE) facilitates reviews of school districts to ensure compliance with federal funding regulations. Fresno Unified is reviewed every two years for this purpose. For the 2025/26 school year, CDE conducted an onsite review for Adult Education and an online review for Fiscal Monitoring. The review concluded on January 23 and resulted in 0 findings. The official Notice of Findings is attached for your reference.

Feedback from the FPM Reviewers was positive, highlighting the district's strong internal processes. The Adult Education reviewer also commended the school for its effective approach to engaging students through in-person orientation support, as well as the strong district-level support provided to the site.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Ashlee Chiarito at (559) 457-3934.

Cabinet Approval: 
Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer



California Department of Education Federal Program Monitoring 2025-26 Notification of Findings

January 22, 2026

This is the official Notification of Findings (NOF) report of the review visit conducted by the California Department of Education (CDE). Because the methodology of the review involves sampling, it is not an assessment of all legal requirements. Nevertheless, the local educational agency (LEA) is responsible for operating its federal categorical programs in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Local Educational Agency: Fresno Unified (10621660000000)

Review Date(s): 01/12/2026 - 01/23/2026

Regional Team Leader(s): Stephanie Woo, 916-319-0585

FPM Coordinator(s): Debra Ryland, 559-457-3664
Ashlee Chiarito, 559-457-3663
Kristin Shamlin, 559-457-3663

Program Reviewed	Program Reviewer	Total Findings
Adult Education (AE)	Arturo Ambriz	0
Fiscal Monitoring (FM)	Amber Ronan	0

No findings resulted from this monitoring review. No further action is required.

NOTE: Copies of this report were distributed to the Agency. This is a public report and must be made available upon request. (California Public Records Act, Government Code section 6250)

Sites Reviewed	Programs Reviewed
Fresno Adult (10621661032309)	AE

Monitoring Results by Program

Adult Education

No program findings resulted from this monitoring review. No further action is required.

Fiscal Monitoring

No program findings resulted from this monitoring review. No further action is required.