



State Senator
Gary K. Hart

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EDUCATION CHAIRS INTRODUCE "CHARTER SCHOOLS" BILLS

Senator Gary K. Hart (D-Santa Barbara) and Assembly Member Delaine Eastin (D-Fremont) today announced legislation (SB 1448 and AB 2585) to authorize the creation of "charter schools". These new and innovative public schools would be established by a team of qualified experts, primarily teachers, who obtain a "charter" from a local school board or the State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction. This charter would allow the team to establish and maintain schools which would operate independently from the existing, sometimes cumbersome, public school bureaucratic rules and structure.

Hart and Eastin chair the education committees in the respective houses of the Legislature. The legislators indicated that although the content of their bills differ somewhat, they each plan to make legislation creating charter schools a top priority in the coming year.

"These 'charter schools' will provide parents and students with expanded educational opportunities within the public school system", said Hart. "At the same time the schools will create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the ability to be fully responsible for the learning program at the school site."

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"Clearly some of California's public schools are broken and require fixing," said Eastin. "It is time for us to create a different environment for public education -- the factory school model is not working for all of our children."

The charter schools would be exempted from existing statutes and regulations covering school districts to allow maximum flexibility in achieving high educational outcomes. However, they would be required to maintain health and safety standards for pupils and staff, operate as nonsectarian entities, be open to all students irrespective of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability and prohibited from charging tuition.

"I believe that the charter school structure will provide educators with the impetus to create innovative and distinctive programs which focus on student outcomes," Eastin noted. "It allows us to do so without compromising the integrity of the California public education system."

"Many public schools do an outstanding job of educating students. However, a large percentage of our students are failing miserably and are disillusioned by school and their plight cries out for a bold departure and alternate ways of providing educational services," Hart said. "The charter school approach would represent a major education reform which would stimulate and encourage such alternatives, while maintaining our traditional democratic commitment to public schools. Charter schools would send an important message to parents, teachers and the education community that there are new ways of operating schools that must be considered and that public schools can no longer be viewed as an exclusive franchise."

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