



State Senator

# Gary K. Hart

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## HART INTRODUCES SEVERAL BILLS FIRST DAY OF SESSION

Senator Gary K. Hart (D-Santa Barbara) announced today the introduction of bills to repeal the limit of how many schools are eligible to become charter schools, discourage tobacco industry attempts to entice teen-agers and people in developing countries to start smoking, and reintroduced legislation vetoed by the governor last year which would authorize local communities by a majority vote to increase funding for their schools.

Hart is the author of the original charter schools bill in 1992 (SB 1448) which authorized the creation of 100 charter schools to operate within the public school system in California. Under the provisions of the bill, interested teachers, parents and community members can obtain a "charter" from a local school board. Under the terms of the charter, the specific goals and operating procedures for the school would be spelled out in the agreement between the board and the organizers, but in exchange for committing to the principles outlined in the petition, and obtaining the approval of a specified percentage of teachers in

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the school district, the school could be freed from the existing, sometimes cumbersome, public school bureaucratic rules and structure.

Hart's recently introduced bill, SB 1264, would repeal the current eligibility limit of 100 schools in California or 10 schools per district and allow any school to apply to become a charter school.

"After the first year of implementation, nearly half of the eligible slots have been filled under SB 1448, with the Los Angeles Unified School District completely filled at 10 charter schools," Hart said. "By lifting the lid on the limit, my bill will allow for continued innovation, local control and creativity in the classroom."

The tobacco tax loophole bill, SB 1271, would eliminate a multi-million dollar state tax loophole used by the tobacco industry to write off advertising and promotion expenses. Legislative fiscal experts estimate that closing this tax loophole would save the state approximately ten million dollars annually.

Hart noted that there has been an enormous 60% increase in tobacco industry expenditures on promotions nationwide since 1988 -- free gifts targeted primarily at teen-agers who studies show are the most vulnerable group with a propensity to start smoking. About \$1 million is spent by the tobacco industry daily in California on cigarette advertising and promotions.

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"Smoking costs taxpayers millions of dollars in health care costs to fight tobacco-related illnesses," Hart said. "It's ludicrous to give the tobacco industry these huge tax loophole funds only to turn around and have them target their advertising to young and vulnerable people, the ones most likely to start smoking."

Hart also re-introduced legislation, SB 1261, which would authorize local communities by a majority vote to increase funding for their schools. Hart carried the same bill last year which passed both houses of the Legislature but was vetoed by Governor Wilson. Hart noted that the current 2/3rd's vote requirement has restricted the ability of school districts to raise money even when significant majorities support such taxes. In 1992, a majority of voters approved 82% of local ballot measures to increase school funding, but only 29% of them became law because of the 2/3rd's vote requirement.

Other bills introduced by Hart include SB 1273, which would delete the current sunset on the California Learning Assessment System, the statewide testing system for K-12 students and SJR 32, a resolution calling for the President and Congress to formulate responsible international policies which support health laws designed to discourage tobacco use in other countries.

Hart noted that while the American government has discouraged smoking at home since 1964, cigarette consumption has increased dramatically in certain Asian countries which have

opened their markets to U.S. tobacco companies following U.S. trade threats starting in 1985. In the developed world, cigarette consumption fell by 6.2% between 1986 and 1991, while in poor countries it grew by 17.4%.

Both SJR 32 and the tobacco tax loophole bill, SB 1271, are supported by the American Cancer Association, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, and the Tobacco Education Oversight Committee.

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