

6 May 1994

Senator Mike Thompson
50 D Street STE 120-A
Santa Rosa CA 95404

Dear Senator Thompson:

I am writing you to urge you to continue your strong commitment for public schools by voting NO on SB 1264 (Hart). As a teacher and association leader in Sonoma Valley I can't emphasize enough the prematurity of this bill.

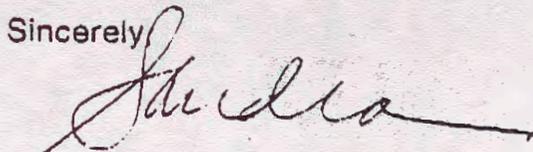
Our fledgling Charter School has caused the discontinued employment of valuable staff, continuous paper work and bureaucratic support for the non-professional educators running this school. What began as a chance for our professional teachers in the Sonoma Valley to create a superb educational opportunity without the added responsibility of Ed. Code restrictions has turned into a chance to create a private school with public monies. ALL THE TEACHERS WHO ORIGINALLY WROTE THE CHARTER HAVE QUIT THE OPERATIONS BOARD. The last one left last week after being out-voted on a motion to hire teachers on *at-will* contracts.

At the last State Council of Education I had the opportunity to talk to other association leaders who have Charter Schools in their districts. We were shocked by the similarities: elitism, anti-union sentiment, lack of inclusion and equal access and de facto segregation. It can not possibly be the intention of the pro-education Senators of California to continue this trend without evaluation.

Senator Thompson, what we have in Sonoma Valley is a bad case of the Emperor's New Clothes. The public may be nodding their head in awe of what they have seen but we know that the Emperor is naked. Look carefully, don't give approval to promises. Demand that these new schools are subject to the same continuous scrutiny as we in traditional public schools enjoy. Let them have a year to air their CLAS test results. Let them have a year to track who enrolls and who leaves. Let the Quackenbush and Alpert open-enrollment bills have an opportunity to take hold as policy. SB 1264 is premature and not in the spirit of Section 47616 of the original Charter School act.

On behalf of the Valley of the Moon Teachers Association, I thank you for your priority attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Sandra M. Lowe, President VMTA/CTA/NEA