

# New Law Ties School Aid to Unification

By VINCENT THOMAS  
Assemblyman, 68th District  
Is it better to require school districts to unify for the state to permit complete local option?

As in most questions of public policy, it seems that there is no simple, hard and fast answer to fit all possible cases. It depends on circumstances.

Legislation in the past year or two has sought to encourage, even demand, school unification. This has angered some, pleased others, with members of both houses of the Legislature getting caught in the crossfire.

THE PUBLIC should understand, but rarely does, that most bills undergo considerable change between the time when they are introduced and when they reach final vote. Hearings are held, committees and legal counsel all take a close look, and many an amendment is offered during the long process, so that the author sometimes has difficulty recognizing his original brainchild.

Cumbersome as it seems, legislation works in a democracy. The results usually represent many compromises, many differing viewpoints. It seldom pleases everybody and often brings the need for further changes and refinements after a short period of experience puts the spotlight on the flaws.

Most recently, legislators found themselves in just such a dilemma on bills seeking to strengthen school unification legislation. As they finally emerged after months of debate and maneuvering, the only two bills remaining alive with a chance of passage were those which combined additional state aid to local school districts with some sort of requirement toward further unification. They were good examples of "the carrot and the stick" technique.

THIS MEANT that these bills had to be accepted as the best to be had at that critical time, regardless of whether the individual Assemblyman or Senator personally favored every provision in the bills. It was either that or see the local school districts have to do without the extra money they so badly needed.

The entire question of school aid and school unification still is in need of fur-

ther study. I am sure that it will be revived at the next session of the Legislature. Unification as a general principle has much to recommend it. A unified district usually can afford to pay better salaries to attract better personnel, can offer more courses, kindergarten through high school. It can cause transportation difficulties by increasing travel time and distances, especially when intervening mountains, rivers or large lakes act as a barrier or when good roads and bridges are

lacking. Rugged weather also can make it more difficult to reach a unified state policy. The present requirement for holding new unification elections every two years until such a measure passes may be needlessly stringent and needlessly expensive. The conditions that affect voters' decisions just do not change that soon. All I have attempted to do here is to explain some of the background of state action in this field. As you can see, the matter is far from settled.

BUT OTHER factors are important, too. Unification in some instances can deprive small towns of their community identity and the pride

they have in their local high school. It can cause transportation difficulties by increasing travel time and distances, especially when intervening mountains, rivers or large lakes act as a barrier or when good roads and bridges are

lacking. Rugged weather also can make it more difficult to reach a unified state policy. The present requirement for holding new unification elections every two years until such a measure passes may be needlessly stringent and needlessly expensive. The conditions that affect voters' decisions just do not change that soon. All I have attempted to do here is to explain some of the background of state action in this field. As you can see, the matter is far from settled.

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Once a common house pet in India, Caracals are becoming rare and are seldom obtainable for zoos. The new Los Angeles Zoo in Griffith Park is one of the few facilities in the world able to acquire Caracals and will exhibit four of the attractive cats when it opens Monday, Nov. 28.

Caracals, closely related to the Lynx and Bobcat, are slender with short, sleek, reddish-brown coats and exceptionally large ears ending in dark plumes that sometime curve out like tassels.

THE ANIMALS were once trained to hunt and are capable of running down a swift Gazelle or catching a bird on wing by leaping into the air and striking it down.

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