

July 28, 2007

THE LAUSD WASTE BASKET



The Summer of Waste

When the temperatures go up, so does the mismanagement at LAUSD.

Hot Topic 1: Millions lost because of faulty LAUSD paperwork

The *Daily News* recently reported that in the past five years, LAUSD has been forced to return nearly \$58 million to the state because of flawed or incomplete applications. The problem? District officials didn't supply supporting documentation or simply failed to turn in the paperwork on time (imagine our members doing that with student grades!). While it's true that other school districts face similar problems with these state reimbursement funds and the paperwork can be complicated, that is no excuse for LAUSD not to get its act together to fight for the money our schools need. Doesn't LAUSD get it? Every penny counts when it comes to educating our students.

Hot Topic 2: Timecard fraud and insider connections: A way of life for LAUSD consultants?

For years, UTLA has decried the ever-expanding army of high-priced consultants hired by LAUSD. Now the *L.A. Times* has lifted the lid on two prominent District consultants and the company they formed specifically to take advantage of the massive LAUSD construction program. Tarek Hijazi and Bassam Raslan pull down more than \$320,000 a year each in consulting fees from LAUSD while also raking in hundreds of thousands more as owners of TBI Associates, which supplies consultants to the same LAUSD program for which Hijazi and Raslan work. Hijazi told the *Times* that they have "no influence" over whom LAUSD hires as consultants, but how else could a tiny, young company like TBI place more people than the 64 other firms that also bid to supply consultants? TBI regularly beats out global engineering giants like Parson Corp. to land plum jobs for their people.

These kind of cozy, insider arrangements are ripe for problems, so it's perhaps no surprise that TBI is now under investigation for alleged timecard fraud. The *Times* story revealed that Raslan not only had been supervising some of his TBI associates, he also signed the timecard of an employee whose direct supervisor had refused to because he believed the employee was padding his hours.

Is there no one at the District who smelled trouble with this arrangement? Who's looking out for potential conflicts of interest? When no one is minding the store, it's pretty easy to steal all the candy.

Be on the waste lookout: Know about a misuse of funds? We don't care if it's \$100 or \$100,000—send details (you can remain anonymous if desired) to webmaster@utla.net.