

## THREATENING PHONE CALLS TO SCHOOLS

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1990

*Reviewed by Board of Managers January 2010*

- WHEREAS, The first Object of PTA is “To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community and place of worship,” and the third Object of PTA is “To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth;” and
- WHEREAS, Plank #10 of its *Legislation Platform* states the California State PTA will support legislation “To prevent, control or eliminate hazards to the health, safety and well-being of all children and youth;” and
- WHEREAS, The fifth principle in the *Statement of PTA Principles* states, “We believe that all children and youth should have an education that develops safe habits and attitudes, and should live in an environment free from avoidable physical hazards;” and
- WHEREAS, In recent years there has been an increase in acts of violence directed at schools, including increased numbers of bomb threats; and
- WHEREAS, Due to advances in communication technology, phone systems that identify incoming calls and allow the phone calls to be traced can be installed in schools; and such systems are believed to deter individuals who might otherwise make threatening calls; and
- WHEREAS, The installation of this type of system may very well decrease disruption to the school day, thus providing a more emotionally secure learning environment for the students and teachers; and could enable appropriate authorities to have immediate information about the source of a threatening call; and
- WHEREAS, Local school districts are required to have disaster preparedness plans; however, such plans may not include a prompt and well-defined plan of action in response to bomb threats; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA seek and support legislation encouraging schools to install a “call identifier” phone system that could enable the source of a threatening phone call to be more easily located; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to work with local school districts to ensure installation of a “call identifier” phone system at each local school; and be it further

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**RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to urge their respective local school districts, fire departments and law enforcement agencies to work together to adopt a plan of action that can be used for immediate response to a bomb threat at any school in the district.

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## **BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

During 1989 there has been an increase in the number of bomb scares in many schools throughout California. Threats to students must be taken seriously in light of the random shootings and other acts of violence which have taken place on school sites located in rural, suburban and urban communities. A majority of the threats are only prank calls, yet the school must go through a complete evacuation as appropriate authorities conduct a thorough search. Instruction time is lost, children must stand outdoors in rainy or cold weather, often without being able to get their jackets or in direct sun without protection, and without restroom facilities. A search may take from one to three hours, depending on the ability of the school district and community agencies to provide sufficient trained or untrained personnel to conduct the search.

While there is no sure way of protecting our schools from an individual who is intent on causing harm, installation of a "call identifier" system could act to deter placement of threatening calls by recording incoming phone calls to the school. This new technology will be available to the public by 1991 and, once in place, could give police a better opportunity to apprehend people who, whether as a prank or with intent to do harm, have attempted to terrorize our schools.

School districts usually do not have personnel who are trained to make a thorough bomb search. However, local law enforcement agencies often have personnel trained in searching for and handling bombs, but may be restricted from searching school lockers because of certain privacy laws. It is obvious that a clear plan of action must be developed by each community so that school districts, in cooperation with other community agencies, can call on a sufficient number of trained personnel to handle an emergency bomb search in an expedient and safe manner.