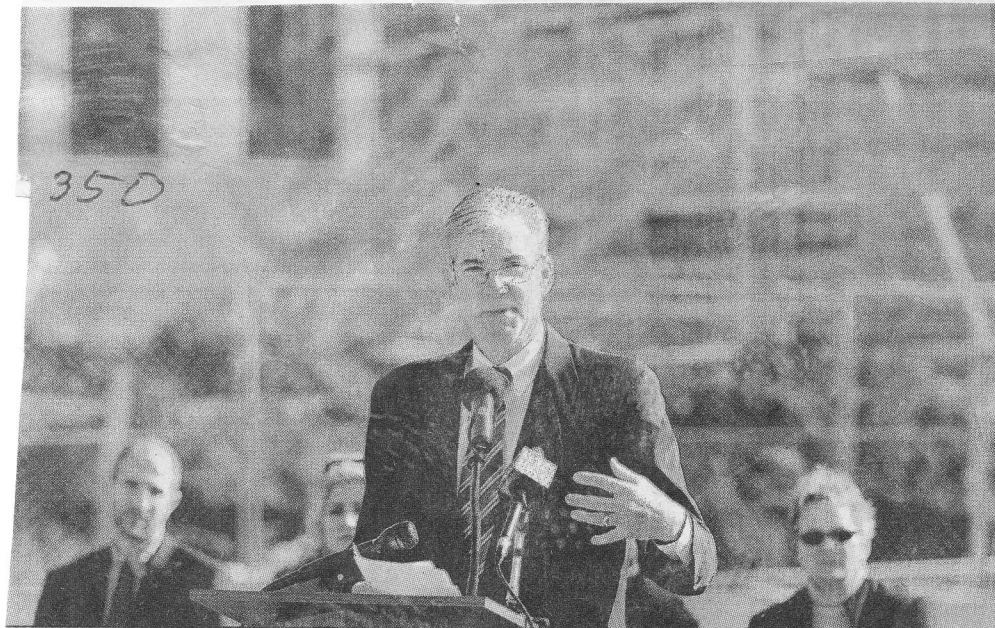


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East Bay schools to get millions for 'green' push



DOUG OAKLEY/STAFF

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson on Friday announced a list of 61 schools that will receive federal tax credits for solar and energy-efficient construction projects. He made the announcement at Berkeley High School, one of the campuses to benefit from the federal funding.

Tax credits awarded for energy-efficient projects at 61 state campuses, districts

By Doug Oakley

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Sixty-one California schools and school districts will receive \$848 million in federal tax credits to offset the cost of installing solar electricity panels and building energy-efficient classrooms, according to newly elected state schools superintendent Tom Torlakson who released a list Friday at a Berkeley news conference.

Six districts in Alameda and Contra Costa counties will get \$83.3 million in tax credits: Berkeley, Piedmont, Mt. Diablo, Dublin, John Swett and Byron.

The credits mean schools that sell construction bonds will be able to subtract their awarded amount from interest they pay on the bonds.

A total of 20 schools and school districts received tax credits throughout the Bay Area.

Torlakson released the list of schools and districts re-

ceiving the tax credits at the Berkeley High School football field, against the backdrop of a \$12 million school athletic and classroom project that includes energy-efficient designs such as low-flow toilets, recycled materials and double-paned windows.

The tax credits are part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Schools and school districts had to apply and compete for the credits.

"When we solarize schools across the state, we can save hundreds of millions of dollars in energy costs and put that money back into education," said Torlakson, who was sworn in as California's superintendent of public instruction this month.

In Berkeley for example, voters recently approved \$210 million in construction bonds for schools. The principal and interest on the bonds combined will reach \$610 million.

Berkeley's award of \$25 million in tax credits will reduce its interest payments from about \$400 million to about \$375 million, according to Berkeley Unified School District Superintendent Bill

Huyett.

"The voters of Berkeley just passed a measure to tax themselves for school bonds," Huyett said. "These are tough times for people to be taxing themselves, and these credits will cost them less and will allow us to accelerate our projects."

Torlakson said the credits will create construction jobs and "teachable moments" for students.

"It makes no sense to teach the next generation of California's students in facilities that are relics of the past, powered by energy sources that are out of touch with our state's renewable future," he said in a news release.

In addition to announcing the credits, Torlakson said he is creating a Schools of the Future Team, which will help schools cut red tape, find funding sources for renewable energy projects and assist districts in negotiating deals for solar and renewable energy projects.

Also at the news conference were Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Oakland, state Sen. Loni Hancock, D-Oakland, and her husband, Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates.