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LOCAL & REGION

State senator wants to drop Cold War communist law

By Steve Lawrence
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Sen. Alan Lowenthal thinks it's about time that California removes some of the last vestiges of the Cold War from its laws.

The Long Beach Democrat has introduced a bill that would scrap statutes allowing teachers and other public employees to be fired for being members of the Communist Party.

The measure, scheduled to be considered Wednesday by the Senate Education Committee, also would drop a requirement that representatives of organizations seeking to use school facilities sign a form stating they do not have communist affiliations.

Lowenthal said the measure would drop old laws that were adopted at the height of the Red Scare following World War II and that have been found unconstitutional by the courts.

"Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the threat between us and communism just isn't there....," he said in an interview. "They are not a danger to our liberty, and the courts have uniformly said that."

But some conservative groups and bloggers have sharply criticized the measure, contending it would lead to the indoctrination of students.

"Less than 20 years after the fall of the communist Soviet Union, California lawmakers are eager to once again begin advancing a political ideology responsible for the deaths of millions

of innocent people," Karen England, executive director of Capitol Resource Family Impact, said in a statement.

"Instead of promoting communism in our schools, lawmakers should be focused on actually teaching students to read, write and think for themselves."

The bill still would allow a public employee to be fired for advocating the violent overthrow of the government. That's a tactic the Communist Party USA has disavowed, said John Casey, Lowenthal's chief of staff.

Lowenthal also amended the bill to leave intact a portion of the law that allows a teacher to be fired for trying to give students "a preference for communism."

"That seems to be the part of the bill

that caused people the most headaches and was not the part of the bill that Alan had the most interest in," Casey said.

Assemblyman Chuck DeVore, R-Irvine, introduced legislation last year that would have dropped the old anti-communist provisions from the statutes but allowed the firing of public employees who supported terrorist groups.

It was rejected, 7-0, by the Education Committee after the American Civil Liberties Union and California Teachers Association argued that it violated the First Amendment.

Definition of terrorist groups: Any group opposing global socialism!

Hey! How stupid do they think we are?
Please call your representative + protest!