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Quake-Periled Schools May Be Used Until '77

Assembly Bill Would Extend Deadline on Work for Two Years

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Earthquake-dangerous classrooms in some California schools may be kept in use until 1977 if a bill before the Assembly is enacted into law.

School systems in the state are now under a 1975 legal deadline to repair, replace or abandon buildings that do not meet state earthquake safety standards.

But under terms of a bill introduced Monday by Assemblyman Leroy Greene (D-Sacramento), a school system could occupy such buildings for up to two additional years.

To qualify for the extension, the school system would have to present a convincing argument—including the letting of construction contracts—to show it is embarked on a program to bring buildings up to earthquake-safe standards or replace them.

A legislative consultant said the bill is at least partly designed to head off more drastic legislation that might extend the 1975 deadline without any restrictions.

And one state official said the bill could actually be a spur to school districts whose earthquake construction programs now are lagging.

But the bill, which reopens the

Favored by L.A. Aide

William C. Rivera, special assistant to Los Angeles Supt. of Schools William Johnston, said, "We would favor the bill because it would help us even though we think we would be all right on the deadline."

Rivera said the city system, which so far has vacated 103 of its 166 school buildings judged earthquake-hazardous, still intends to have all permanent buildings vacated by June 30, 1974—a full year ahead of the present deadline.

After that, there will remain a number of pre-1933 bleachers and portable classroom buildings to be vacated. The district still intends to be out of them by the 1975 deadline, Rivera said.

[illegible] this final stage. In such [illegible] Rivera said, the Greene bill would be helpful to the city system by allowing such structures to be used another year or two while new construction is completed.

Key Educational Legislator

Greene, chairman of the Assembly Education Committee, is a key legislator in education matters.

A consultant to the committee said the bill is an attempt to help school districts that are "processing in good faith" with earthquake safety programs but will be unable to meet the 1975 deadline to vacate all unsafe buildings.

That deadline was set by the Legislature five years ago.

The consultant said the bill also anticipates a push next year by some urban school districts, which are saddled with most of the earthquake-hazardous buildings, to extend the 1975 deadline without qualification.

The Green bill, the consultant added, is an attempt to prevent that by allowing for exemptions if good cause can be shown.

Under terms of the bill, it would be up to the state Allocation Board to decide if a district qualifies for an exemption. The board is the state agency that under existing law is reviewing and approving earthquake-construction plans submitted by

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2 groups defend efforts to block fund allocation for unsafe schools

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Two local groups defended before the Board of Education yesterday their decision to join in a suit to halt allocation of state bond funds for the reconstruction of earthquake-prone schools.

They criticized Schools Atty. Ralph Stern for calling the suit an "irresponsible request."

The two organizations are the San Diego League of Women Voters and Citizens United for Racial Equality (CURE).

"It is difficult to understand how anyone familiar with the process of league decision-making and the history of our efforts can dismiss our latest action as 'irresponsible,'" Joyce Beers, league president, told the board.

The suit was filed in San Francisco July 23 and seeks to prohibit release of $325 million in state funds to replace unsafe schools unless racial and ethnic balances can be assured.

San Diego has 90 or more schools which are racially segregated, according to state guidelines. CURE and the league are protesting that schools are being rebuilt on existing sites which will perpetuate existing conditions.

Mrs. Beers and Keith Robinson of CURE said the district should eliminate racial imbalance in reconstruction plans.

They said many requests have been made to the board through the years to correct the situation, but that very little has been done.

"The league considers litigation as a viable, dynamic process for making the nation's laws live and function," Mrs. Beers said.

"It is one of the strategies for citizens to use, and in some cases it may be the only strategy to get results."