

Advocacy Continues . . .

The WASB Government Relations team stays busy when the state Legislature is not in session



Even though the state Legislature is not in session, there is still legislative activity happening and we want our members to be up-to-date on the latest issues. Thus, the WASB Government Relations Team (GR) is still regularly updating our blog, the *WASB Legislative Update* at wasblegupdate.wordpress.com, our social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter), as well as compiling updates in our weekly *Legislative Newsletter* email. Among other items, we have posted a number of advocacy tips, including suggested questions on K-12 education issues for use by school boards that may be interested in hosting a candidate forum.

We are also currently in the process of moving to a new advocacy software that will make it easier for you to contact your federal and state lawmakers in response to WASB alerts. We are excited about the possibilities for increased engagement by our members this software can provide and will announce more specifics in the coming months.

■ Legislative Agenda

The WASB legislative agenda for the coming year is created by the GR team and submitted to the WASB Board of Directors for review and approval each fall. We try to predict

emerging issues that will be priorities, including in the state budget debates, and formulate positions based on WASB resolutions adopted by the Delegate Assembly. Once the 2017 legislative agenda is finalized, we will share it with you via our blog and other mediums.

■ Meeting with Governor's Office & Legislators

Even though the Legislature is not currently in session, the GR team is meeting with lawmakers to discuss bill ideas and other issues in preparation for the 2017-18 session. We have approached several legislators to draft bills based on recent resolutions approved by the Delegate Assembly. We also have met and will continue to meet with the governor's office to discuss issues heading into the next state budget debate. We are also meeting with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and with other public education advocacy groups to share ideas and suggestions about changes we want to see.

■ Federal Activities

In June, the GR team accompanied the WASB Executive Committee to Washington, D.C. to meet with our Congressional offices and express appreciation for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the long-



overdue replacement for the No Child Left Behind Act, and to encourage continued progress on federal legislation to update laws governing school meals (Child Nutrition Act) and career and technical education (Carl Perkins Act).

■ Policy & Resolutions Committee

This time of year, the GR team is also busy working with the WASB Policy and Resolutions Committee.

The committee is appointed annually by the WASB president following recommendations made by the WASB Board of Directors. The committee is comprised of a least one school board member from each WASB region and from each type of school district (common, unified,

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K-8 and UHS).

The committee will review proposed resolutions submitted by member boards (due Sept. 15), and decide which will be advanced to the January 2017 Delegate Assembly. The committee may modify board-submitted resolutions or suggest its own resolutions for consideration by the Delegate Assembly.

We receive the submitted resolutions from member boards and research the topics to provide context and background for the committee to utilize during their deliberations. We also staff the committee meetings and are there to answer any questions.

We have been in conversations with board members and administrators about ideas they have for resolution topics and have helped a couple of boards put their ideas into writing. We are always happy to answer questions or provide information about the resolution process or specific resolution topics.

In addition, we reviewed the WASB Resolutions Book this summer and will be bringing suggestions to the committee regarding resolutions that are outdated or no longer relevant for possible removal or amendment.

■ Study Committees

During the interim period when the Legislature is not in session, Legislative Council Study Committees are formed on a number of topics based on suggestions submitted by legislators. Often these topics involve issues that are difficult to resolve in the regular course of legislative business or that legislators believe need to be considered more in-depth. Each study committee is charged with studying its issue and recom-

mending legislative solutions.

For each approved study topic, a committee is appointed comprised of legislative and public members with expertise or interest in the issue. There are three study committees that the GR team is following this session: School Data, Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices, and Rural Broadband. We monitor the activities of these study committees carefully.

We solicited school board members to apply to participate on these committees and Margaret Murphy, board clerk for the Neenah Joint School District, was chosen to serve on the School Data committee.

The WASB was invited to testify before the Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices committee. Dan Rossmiller, director of Government Relations, asked that any legislation recommended by this committee ultimately include provisions allowing school districts the option to post certain notices and/or documents on their websites as opposed to paying to publish them in a newspaper. This testimony was based on Resolution 1.60 Elimination/Reduction of Newspaper Notice/Publishing Requirements adopted by the Delegate Assembly in January.

■ Mental Health Coalition

The WASB GR team is currently in discussions with a coalition of social service and community organizations that are seeking to expand school-based mental health services and has also met with the DPI and the governor's office on this topic. Our involvement is based on Resolution 6.06 Mental Health Supports adopted by the Delegate

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For updates and information on the progress of all of these efforts, follow our WASB Legislative Update blog and/or the Legislative Newsletter emails.

Assembly in January. We will update you on the product of these discussions as we work with others to develop a strategy to achieve significant support for mental health services in school districts while respecting local school board authority and not creating any new mandates on schools.

■ DPI Budget Request

The GR team has been in regular meetings with the DPI to provide input on their 2017-19 agency budget request. All state agencies put together a budget request to the governor that he considers when crafting his initial state budget proposal. In addition, we have been working with lawmakers to request information from the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau to inform these discussions.

■ Speaking Engagements

The GR team gave presentations recently at the WASB Summer Leadership Institute in Green Bay and the annual CESA 3 Convention in Fennimore. If you would like us to come talk to your board or CESA Board of Control, let us know.

Even with the Legislature out of session, the WASB GR team stays busy advocating for you and keeping you informed. Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions or concerns. ■

Dan Rossmiller is the WASB government relations director. Chris Kulow is the WASB government relations specialist.