



A New Chapter in NSBA's Rich History

I recently received a book that details the history of the National School Boards Association. This book not only told some fascinating tales about the 73-year-old organization, it also gave me a great understanding of where we've been and described some of the battles we've undertaken as a national organization.

Some of these are familiar debates. But the lesson I took away from the book was this: There has never been a more critical time to stand up for local school board governance and for public education across the country.

As your 2013-14 NSBA President, I'm working with Executive Director Thomas J. Gentzel, who took the reins in December after nearly 30 years at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, and his team to transform the organization. We are revamping NSBA to be a tougher, leaner, and more effective advocate for the work you do as school board leaders.

While we know that NSBA has always been a player in Washington, D.C., we may not have operated to our full capacity. And with the current political environment, we no longer can afford to do that.

NSBA is focusing on our core missions — legislative, legal, public advocacy, and member services — to better promote school board governance and public education. We are going to take on the misguided special interests who seek to dismantle public education for their own profit. Those who promote school choice through vouchers, charters that are not held accountable by local school boards, and other unproven experiments will have to answer to us.

NSBA will go to battle, through the courts and legislatures, for laws and policies that support public education and local school board governance. We will build strong partnerships with state association members, corporate stakeholders, and other national groups to

increase our effectiveness.

To do this, we are building an army of advocates: local school board members who will take a stand for our community schools. I believe we have a responsibility to fight for the futures of our more than 50 million schoolchildren and their civil right to a great education.

We need school board members across the country to unite behind this cause and help us stave off all the initiatives from state lawmakers who are being bought out by special interests.

We're going to take our army to Capitol Hill and demand that the federal government back off and let local school boards do their jobs.

For example, this year NSBA proposed legislation, the Local School Board Governance and Flexibility Act, and it recently has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. We now have 20 cosponsors for the bill, which would establish a framework for improved recognition

of local school board authority when the U.S. Department of Education acts on issues that impact local school districts unless specifically authorized in federal legislation.

NSBA has worked with the Louisiana School Boards Association to file suit against that state's school voucher program. The Louisiana Supreme Court found in favor of public schools and declared the funding mechanism for the vouchers unconstitutional earlier this year.

We are also launching a major public advocacy campaign, to show the good work of public schools and school boards. And you will be hearing about new services we will offer to help you do your jobs better. ■

Pickler is president of the National School Boards Association and a member of the Shelby County School Board in Tennessee.



NSBA's New Direction

Perspective from Wisconsin school board member Tim Sivertson

Tim Sivertson, president of the Elk Mound Area School Board, serves as Central Region Director for the National School Boards Association (NSBA). He also served on the "New NSBA" Planning Committee that provided new strategic direction to the NSBA. Concerning NSBA's new direction, Sivertson shared the following:

"The Board of Directors of the NSBA has been very engaged over the past couple of years aligning and refocusing NSBA's direction. We have completed our internal work and are now applying it externally.

Our new mission is focused on working with and through our state associations (like the WASB) and stepping up NSBA advocacy for equity and excellence in public

education through school board leadership. To that extent, the NSBA has launched a new national campaign — "Stand Up 4 Public Schools." Visit standup4publicschools.org and be part of the team of 'Army of Advocates' as we put our advocacy into action.

I am committed to our children's future by making a difference today. The WASB is ready to serve you in providing the tools and information you may need as you put your state and federal advocacy into action. Being well versed with accurate information is the key to all of our credibility and wanted outcomes. As part of the federation built on the state associations, the NSBA is ready to work for you." □

Stand Up for Public Education

2013 WASB President Nancy Thompson urges school leaders to share their success stories

In a passionate address wrapping up her year as WASB President, Nancy Thompson, a member of the Waterloo School Board, called on school board members and administrators to form an army of advocates to stand up for public education.

“The forces working to dismantle and discredit public education have not gone away,” Thompson said. “Their advocacy for independent charter schools with no local school board oversight, their support for increased vouchers, and their efforts to ultimately eliminate public education, as we know it, continue to increase.”

Thompson said now, more than ever, school leaders need to share their district’s success stories to show that public education is flourishing. She urged school leaders to participate in the WASB Stand Up for Public Education campaign, which highlights outstanding programs and accomplishments in public schools around the state.

“We need to ensure that the greater community knows about the good work taking place in our public schools on a daily basis,” she said.

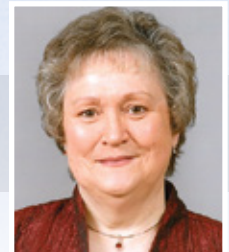
Progress has been made. Over the course of the past year, Thompson pointed out that many positive steps were made on behalf of public edu-



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“We need to ensure that the greater community knows about the good work taking place in our public schools on a daily basis.”

cation. These included an increase in allowable school spending in each year of the biennium, and needed funding for educator effectiveness programs, SMARTER Balance and ACT assessments, and reading readiness screening. Thompson was also proud of the fact that advocacy efforts led to the removal from last year’s budget bill of proposed state-wide special education voucher program and a state-level independent charter school oversight board.

“I believe that we made progress working together and that we moved forward,” Thompson said of the past year.

In addition to urging school leaders to advocate and share the success stories from their districts, she also thanked school board members and administrators for their work.

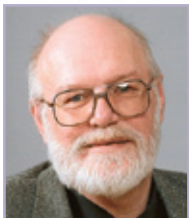
“Your commitment to all students is just outstanding,” she said. “Your support of public education, your willingness to go above and beyond everything for the students in your district was a beacon shining brightly to me throughout the year. I thank you so much for everything you do.” ■



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Blecha to Lead WASB in 2014

WASB Region 3 Director Mike Blecha was elected as the 2014 WASB President by the WASB Board of Directors. Blecha is a member of the Green Bay Area Public School Board.

Region 9 Director Wanda Owens was elected 1st Vice President and Region 1 Director Stu Olson was elected 2nd Vice President. Thompson will be recognized as immediate past president. Additionally, Ron Frea, a member of the Pewaukee School Board, officially joined the WASB Board of Directors as Region 15 Director.