

Leaders

A Newsletter for Florida School Board Members

School boards contend charter school commission is unconstitutional

The Florida School Boards Association and 11 local school districts have filed suit against the State Board of Education and the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission challenging the constitutionality of the authority of that Commission to approve or deny the establishment of charter schools in Florida.

FSBA was joined in the suit by the school boards of Alachua, Broward, Duval, Escambia, Flagler, Hernando, Lee, Leon, Martin, Palm Beach, and St. Johns counties.

"Florida's Constitution clearly states that elected school boards are responsible for the operation, supervision and control of all public schools, yet this new law allows an appointed body to have these powers over public charter schools," said FSBA President Sue Hershey, Martin County School Board member.

The suit arises from the enactment of legislation passed during the 2006 legislative session, which created the seven-member Florida Schools of Excellence Commission. Members of the Commission were appointed by the State Board of Education in August. The new law describes the commission as an independent, state-level entity empowered to authorize and act as a sponsor of charter schools. It also authorizes municipalities, state universities, community colleges, and regional educational consortia to act as co-sponsors of charter schools.

"Florida school boards have a long history of support for charter schools and with that school board support, supervision, and control, charter schools have flourished in



**Senator Lynn:
Legislator of the Year**

Lee Swift, Charlotte County School Board member and chairman of FSBA's Legislative Committee, presents the association's Legislator of the Year honors during FSBA's Fall Conference to Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Ormond Beach. (For other conference photos, see the insert in this issue of Leaders.)

Florida," said FSBA Executive Director Wayne Blanton. "Support for charter schools is not the issue in this case. This case focuses on defending the constitution with respect to the governance and local control of all public schools, including charter schools."

The suit contends that by allowing the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission to approve the establishment and operation of public charter schools, the Commission would usurp the power of the elected school boards set forth in Article IX, Section 4(b) of the Florida Constitution which requires that the school board shall operate, control, and supervise all free public schools within the school district.

The suit also maintains that the appointment of the Commission by the State Board of Education, which is also an appointed entity, is incompatible with Article IX, Section 4(a) of the Florida Constitution requiring that elected school board members retain the authority to govern all public schools in their district.

"The Florida constitution clearly designates the role and authority of elected school boards in the provision of a high quality system of public education," said Ms. Hershey. "We have filed this suit to define that authority and to ensure that public school governance is always close to the people we are elected to represent."

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Leadership Calling

STAR submissions: 100 percent

During one of several meetings sponsored by the Department of Education to seek input on the legislatively-mandated STAR (Special Teachers Are Rewarded) program, it was announced that all 67 school districts had met the Dec. 31 deadline for submitting their STAR proposals.

Brevard, Calhoun, Citrus and Hillsborough counties have already had their plans approved. The State Board of Education has 45 days after a district's STAR plan is submitted to approve it. If fault is found with the plan, the State Board must spell out specific areas that need revision. Districts then have until March 1, 2007 to submit their final plan.

The Legislature budgeted \$147.5 million for STAR. It was included in 2006-07 budget proviso language, which means unless lawmakers pass a separate STAR law this session or include it in the budget again, the program, and its money, will go away.

Pledge to America's Schoolchildren campaign underway

Get your congressional representatives and two senators to "sign the pledge." That was the message NSBA President Jane Gallucci, a Pinellas County School Board member and former FSBA president, highlighted during her brief presentation at the state association's annual fall conference in Tampa in early December.

Last fall, the National School Boards Association kicked off its campaign designed to get every representative and senator to throw their support behind key education issues that, said Ms. Gallucci, "can provide all students with 21st century skills."

She added: "We want help in retaining quality teachers, improvements to No Child Left Behind and support to close the achievement gap."

The pledge, available at NSBA's web site (www.nsba.org) asks members of Congress to support five "basic principles" regarding improving NCLB, funding IDEA and supporting early childhood education, highly qualified teachers and education technology.

In essence, Ms. Gallucci said, the pledge is a message to Congress to "fund what you pass. They need to hear us now!"

Thanks to our sponsors

We would like to thank the Willis Group for its sponsorship of the Fall Conference dinner at the Columbia Restaurant in Tampa. The Willis Group was one of 51 sponsors which participated in this year's meeting held Nov. 28-Dec. 1 in Tampa.

For a complete list of all of our sponsors, see the back side of the insert included with this issue of Leaders.

Upcoming Events

Feb. 21-23

New School Board Member Orientation, DoubleTree Hotel, Tallahassee

March 6

Florida Legislative Session begins, Tallahassee

March 27-28

Certified Board Member training, DoubleTree Hotel, Tallahassee

March 28-30

FSBA Day in the Legislature, DoubleTree Hotel, Tallahassee



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Key legislative committee chairs

Here are some of the legislative committee chairs, House and Senate, of major interest to FSBA:

Senate

Banking and Insurance

Chair, Bill Posey, R-Rockledge
Vice chair, Ted Deutch, D-Delray Beach

Fiscal Policy and Calendar Committee

Chair, Lisa Carlton, R-Osprey

Education Facilities Appropriations

Chair, Jim King, R-Jacksonville
Vice chair, Steve Geller, D-Hallandale Beach

Education Pre K - 12 Appropriations

Chair, Stephen Wise, R-Jacksonville
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Finance and Tax

Chair, Mike Haridopolos, R-Melbourne
Vice chair, Ted Deutch, D-Delray Beach

Higher Education Appropriations

Chair, Evelyn Lynn, R-Ormond Beach
Vice chair, Jeremy Ring, D-Margate

Education Pre K - 12

Chair Don Gaetz, R-Niceville
Vice chair, Frederica Wilson, D-Miami Gardens

Higher Education

Chair, Steve Oelrich, R-Gainesville
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House

Schools & Learning Council

Chair, Joe Pickens R-Palatka
Vice chair: Anthony Traviesa, R-Brandon

Committee on Education Innovation & Career Preparation

Chair, Thad Altman, R-Melbourne
Vice chair, John Legg, R-Port Richey

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Chair, Anitere Flores, R-Miami
Vice chair, Marti Coley, R-Marianna

Committee on Postsecondary Education

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Vice chair, William Proctor, R-St. Augustine

Committee on Insurance

Chair, Dennis Ross, R-Lakeland
Vice chair, Ralph Poppell, R-Titusville

Policy & Budget Council

Chair, Ray Sansom, R-Fort Walton Beach
Vice chair, Stan Mayfield, R-Vero Beach

Rules & Calendar Council

Chair, David Rivera, R-Miami
Vice chair, Marsha Bowen, R-Winter Haven

Need help for D or F schools? Call SWAT

A new program—with the famous “SWAT” acronym—has been created by Florida’s Department of Education to provide technical assistance in leadership development for low-performing schools.

School Wide Assistance Teams are designed to provide coaching and strategic interventions within the identified schools and classrooms to yield increased student performance on the FCAT and achievement of Sunshine State Standards.

The SWAT project specifically targets Florida’s 137 “D” and “F” schools. Highest need schools are those Title I schools that are repeating “F” schools, first time “F” schools, “D” schools that are former “F” schools and “D” schools. Services are provided to Title I schools at no cost and non-Title I schools may contract for services. Some 63 of the 68 Title I schools eligible for the program are already working with SWAT coordinators “in

some capacity,” said Thomas B. Maher, former Indian River County superintendent and SWAT project director.

“Low performing schools are working just as hard as high-performing schools to help students meet Florida’s rigorous education goals and standards,” said Mr. Maher. “It’s time to try something new and this initiative is a good place to start.”

Three regional coordinators have been brought onboard to conduct and coordinate team activities at the local level, he said. The North regional coordinator is William Johnson, former assistant Leon County superintendent (johnsonbill@earthlink.net); Central, Clarence Wingrove, former Hernando County principal (cwingrove1@tampabay.rr.com) and South, Dr. Frank Raffone, former Martin County principal (rafsum@aol.com).

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From the President

By SUE HERSHEY



Sue Hershey

We need more federal funding; insurance reform ahead for lawmakers

The new year is off to a frenzied start: A new governor and some new legislators in Tallahassee which means new faces on legislative committees, a new Congress that's now controlled by Democrats. What hasn't changed, at least yet, is federal funding.

Since the 109th Congress, which ended its session in 2006, failed to reach agreement on spending bills for the current fiscal year, Congress passed continuing spending resolutions which keeps federal funding at current levels. Not good. That froze many K-12 issues even though the mandate to provide services is increasing.

That, I'm sure, will be one of the first issues the 110th Congress will address. Another will be the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. Your National School Boards Association has developed several key issues that must be addressed in any NCLB reauthorization,

Rep. Don Young, (R-AK), has filed a bill that contains more than 40 provisions that address the concerns of local school districts. H.R. 5709 focuses on five areas: assessments, measuring adequate yearly progress, applying sanctions, state flexibility and non-public schools. These provisions will enable schools to assess student performance more fairly and accurately and to spend their resources more strategically. The bill is grouped into four areas: measuring adequate yearly progress (AYP); state flexibility granted by the U.S. Department of Education; implementing sanctions; and Title I students in nonpublic schools.

Inadequate funding of NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have financially strapped school districts as they work to meet the student achievement levels and the other requirements of NCLB in addition to fulfilling the IDEA mandates. Since NCLB was enacted in 2002 and IDEA was reauthorized less than two years ago, Congress has fallen short of providing its share of the cost that it just so recently authorized and promised. Confronted by a failed Congressional commitment and the ever expanding costs of these two laudatory, but expensive programs, school districts are being forced to cut other vital parts of their education programs. Specifically, the Administration's 2007 budget request would provide little to no increase in NCLB and IDEA as the two major sources of federal funding to schools.

These issues and more, I'm sure, will be discussed at NSBA's Federal Relations Network Jan. 28-30 in Washington.

Locally, Gov. Charlie Crist was officially installed Jan. 2. In his speech he mentioned one of his key issues will be insurance reform, something near and dear to our hearts.

The Legislature will convene March 6, but before that, you should make arrangements to meet personally with your local representatives and senators. Let them know who

you are, what you do and even invite them to visit your schools.

Two upcoming events of particular interest to FSBA members: New School Board Member Orientation Feb. 21-23 and FSBA's Day in the Legislature March 28-30. Both events are in Tallahassee at the DoubleTree Hotel.

Finally, I hope you have a wonderful 2007. As you can see, we have a lot on our plates. If you'd like to help your association by serving on one of our committees, let me know. We need, and want, your input.

Ms. Hershey, a member of the Martin County School Board, is the 2006-2007 president of the Florida School Boards Association.

SWAT available to schools

Continued from Page 3

Mr. Maher said once a school has accepted DOE's offer for direct assistance, a regional coordinator, along with "high-performing professional educators," will meet with the school's leadership team.

"Together, they will review current intervention activities, analyze benchmark assessments and conduct walk-through observations of classrooms," added Sharon Mitchell, program coordinator for the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, which serves as grant administrator. "After a thorough analysis of information collected, the group will agree upon what services the SWAT will provide," she added.

Some of the services SWATs can offer include coaching, modeling of high yield learning strategies, assistance making data-driven adjustments to teaching and learning, workshops and seminars, data interpretation, conferencing, media presentations through Web site links, television and the Florida Education Channel at PAEC and in-service training.

For further information, contact Mr. Maher at thomasbmaher@bellsouth.net or 772-559-1112. More information is also available at the PAEC web site: www.paec.org.

'The Future is Now' for FSBA members at fall conference

The 61st Annual Joint Fall Conference Nov. 28-Dec. 1 in Tampa was sponsored by the Florida School Boards Association, the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, and six other organizations representing attorneys, public school liaisons, business officers, insurance executives, and more.

Updates on the most important educational issues of the day were on tap for those who attended. NCLB, charter schools, STAR and teacher pay, implementing healthy schools, use of facilities by non-school entities, and insurance were just some of the concurrent sessions greeting attendees.

In addition, several crucial, "hot" legal topics were discussed, including emails, extra curricular activities at schools, current charter school litigation and sovereign immunity. Here are a few pictorial highlights from the conference:



DOE, SBE represented

FSBA President Sue Hershey, Martin County School Board, welcomes Florida Education Commissioner John Winn, left, and Phil Handy, vice chair of Florida's State Board of Education, to the association's fall conference in Tampa.



School board attorney honored

The Richard "Spike" Fitzpatrick award, presented annually to an outstanding school board attorney, went this year to Ned Julian, center, Seminole County. Congratulating him are Wayne Blanton, left, FSBA executive director and Dr. Bill Vogel, Seminole superintendent.



Advanced Boardmanship Award goes to...

FSBA Vice President Beverly Slough, right, St. Johns County School Board, joins a select group of board members who have achieved their Advanced Boardmanship Certification. The award was presented by Joie Cadle, Orange County School Board. The special certification is given only to individuals who have met stringent criteria as judged by a panel of peers. The other two board members who have achieved this designation are Judge "Rick" Roach, Orange County, and Carol Vallencourt, Clay County.



Superintendent of the Year

St. Lucie County Superintendent Michael J. Lannon, center, and wife, Pam, receive kudos for his Superintendent of the Year honors presented by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents. Congratulating him are Bill Montford, left, FADSS CEO, and Dr. Joseph Joyner, right, St. Johns County superintendent.



We thank the sponsors of our 61st Annual Joint Conference

Nov. 28-Dec. 1, 2006

The Florida School Boards Association and the Florida Association of District School Superintendents would like to recognize our highly valued partners. Relationships with our sponsors are instrumental in our pursuit of a higher quality of education in Florida.

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