

# Leaders

A Newsletter for Florida School Board Members

## 'Powertools for schools' can enhance education

**W**ith the theme, "Growing together, building futures, one student at a time," Lee County School Board member Jeanne Dozier assumed the 2007-08 presidency of the Florida School Boards Association. She succeeds Sue Hershey, Martin County School Board.

"I would like to thank you for the honor and privilege to serve as your next FSBA president," Ms. Dozier told members following her installation.

The other 2007-08 officers are: Beverly Slough, St. Johns County, president-elect; Georgia "Joy" Bowen, Leon County, vice president; Lee Swift, Charlotte County, treasurer; and Ms. Hershey, immediate past president.

"Each of you are truly in positions that have far-reaching effects," she said of FSBA's members, "and this association does a great deal to strengthen public education – your commitment each day is evident of your dedication to the children you serve."

Calling associations "the hidden glue of our society and economy. . .(they) go largely unnoticed, yet they do much to hold the entire structure together. As such, associations cannot settle for being only good; they must work toward greatness and this greatness for FSBA is the promotion of public education."

She said she searched "long and hard" to determine what her focus as FSBA president should be. "Two years ago, our theme was 'Quality, equity and diversity,' QED. And last year, FSBA's theme was 'The future is now.' As I searched the Internet, exchanged e-mails with friends and colleagues trying to find a common theme between those two previous themes, one thing dawned on me—everywhere we turn, technology has become a natural part of life. And if it is not a part of our lives every day, then we are living in the dark ages.

"Then it hit me," she added, "that's what I want to focus on this year—the use of technology to enhance and energize public education. Let's call it, 'power tools for schools.'"

Merging the two previous themes, she explained that technology can be the tool "to help bring quality, equity and diversity to all of the students we are charged with caring for. And nowhere is the theme 'The future is now' more appropriate than in the realm of technology."

Quoting David Warlick, a North Carolina educator, she added: "For the first time in history, our job as educators

is to prepare students for a future we cannot clearly describe.' How right he was. Each day there are new advances in our power tools. The tool chest is full of new devices we are only beginning to understand."

After reviewing the "power tools" of yesterday—chalkboards, erasers, mimeograph machines (purple ink and all), overhead projectors ("where teachers had to master the art of writing upside down"), she turned to 2007.

"Gone are the old chalkboards and in their place are white boards, with those cool colored markers. No one has to bang out erasers anymore. And in some classrooms, overhead projectors have given way to smartboards," she said. "They use computer technology to really make today's lessons come alive for students—teachers can have interactive lessons in real time."

She said school boards "have always recognized the importance of providing new technology for our schools. . .all in the attempt to keep education relevant to today's students, and to help teachers be more efficient and effective."

Ms. Dozier urged members to "keep this focus on technology. . .Every one of us here is committed to providing whatever resources we can for our students and faculty. Today, more than ever, this commitment is vital."

Technology has made the world smaller because "our students here in Florida can interface with students around the world. . .all of this through the use of technology. (So) as we strive to provide a world-class education for our students, technology must be part of our plan."

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Jeanne Dozier

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# Leadership Calling

## Brevard wins Sterling Award

**B**revard County Public Schools is the recipient of the 2007 Governor's Sterling Award which recognizes excellence in management, operations and student performance. In the 15 years the award has been presented, Brevard is just the second school district—Pinellas was the other—to receive this award.

"This is a great achievement for Brevard Public Schools and for our community," said Dr. Richard DiPatri, Brevard superintendent. "It substantiates outstanding performance and acknowledges the pursuit of excellence at all levels of this organization. It also validates the high quality employees in this school system, whose mission is to serve every student with excellence as the standard."



*Richard DiPatri*

"I am honored to congratulate and recognize the 2007 Governor's Sterling Award Recipients," said Governor Charlie Crist. "The process required for receiving this award is recognized as one of the most comprehensive methods for any organization to improve performance and drive excellent results."

"The employees, volunteers and extended members of our . . . schools family have again demonstrated why we will eventually be recognized as first in the nation," commented Robert Jordan, Brevard County School Board

chairman. "Winning this honor at the district level demonstrates our commitment to consistently provide quality programs for all of our children."

The Brevard school district is Florida's tenth largest with 85 schools, 14 special centers, 13 charter schools and nearly 76,000 students from 17 municipalities. It has achieved an "A" rating from Florida for the past three years and nearly 83% of its schools have received an "A," exceeding the state average by 53%.

For 15 years the Governor's Sterling Award has recognized organizations and businesses in Florida that have achieved performance superiority within their management and operations. Each winner has undergone an in-depth on-site review of the organization's management systems and performance results.

## Tax break for homeowners, possible problems for schools

**T**o no one's surprise, the Legislature in its June special session, adopted a two-prong property tax reform measure, part of which is dependant on a constitutional amendment passing voters next January.

The first part of the legislation, which takes effect Oct. 1 when new city/county budgets kick in, requires local governments to roll back their tax rates to 2006-07 levels. Further immediate cuts of between three percent and nine percent could also be required, depending on how much each county and city has increased taxes during the past five years. Property tax increases will then be capped based on personal-income growth and new construction.

The second phase is part of a constitutional amendment which will be on the Jan. 29 ballot during Florida's presidential primary. That amendment would expand homestead exemptions to 75% of the home's assessed value on the first \$200,000 and a further 15% exemption on values between \$200,000 and \$500,000. But home owners would be able to choose to keep their Save Our Home tax break instead.

While legislators have promised to hold harmless public schools, it means they'll have to come up with about \$1.8 billion by 2009, or some \$7 billion over the next five years. (Also see Dr. Blanton's column on Page 4.)



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# Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission Members

**T**he Taxation and Budget Reform Commission (TBRC), created by constitutional amendment, meets every 20 years to review Florida's tax and funding structure. Here are the current members, appointed by the House Speaker, Senate President, and Governor. See Dr. Wayne Blanton's column on Page 4 for more information on this commission.

Allan Bense, Chairman, Panama City, former House Speaker, partner with GAC Contractors.

James A. Scott, Vice Chairman, former Senate President from Fort Lauderdale, attorney. He was chairman of the Taxation Committee for the 1997-98 Constitution Revision Commission.

Hoyt "Barney" Barnett, vice chairman, Publix Super Markets, Lakeland. Former chairman of Florida TaxWatch. He also served on the 1990-92 TBRC.

Martha W. Barnett, Tallahassee attorney. She also served on the 1990-92 TBRC and the 1997-98 Constitution Revision Commission. Ms. Barnett previously served as president of the American Bar Association.

R. Mark Bostick, Winter Haven, president of Comcar Industries.

Talbot "Sandy" D Alemberte, former FSU president and former legislator, Tallahassee, who also chaired the 1977-78 Constitution Revision Commission.

Mike Hogan, Jacksonville, Duval County Tax Collector and former legislator.

Julia Johnson, Windermere, lawyer, former Florida Public Service commissioner.

Bruce Kyle, Ft. Myers, Circuit Court Judge in the Twentieth Circuit. He is also a former legislator.

Carlos Lacasa, Miami, attorney and former legislator.

Patricia Levesque, Tallahassee, executive director of the Foundation for Florida's Future and former deputy chief of staff to Gov. Jeb Bush.

Alan Levine, Ft. Lauderdale, president/CEO of the North Broward Hospital District, former secretary of the Agency

for Healthcare Administration and deputy chief of staff to Gov. Bush.

Roberto "Bobby" Martinez, Coral Gables, lawyer and currently a member of the State Board of Education.

Jacinta Mathis, Orlando lawyer and former member of the 1997-98 Florida Constitution Revision Commission.

John M. McKay, Bradenton, former Senate President and currently a real estate broker.

Bob McKee, Leesburg, Lake County Tax Collector.

Lesley J. "Les" Miller, Jr., Tampa, former legislator and currently director of Community Affairs and Student Ombudsman at The University of South Florida.

Randy Miller, Tallahassee, executive vice president, Florida Retail Federation and former head of Florida's Department of Revenue.

Jade Thomas Moore, executive director, Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association.

Nancy J. Riley, Clearwater real estate broker and 2007 president of the Florida Association of Realtors.

Darryl Rouson, St. Petersburg lawyer and immediate past president of the St. Petersburg NAACP.

Susan Story, Pensacola, president/CEO, Gulf Power.

William Gregory "Greg" Turbeville, Tallahassee governmental consultant and former policy director for Gov. Bush and chief of staff for former House Speaker John Thrasher.

Kenneth "Ken" Wilkinson, Fort Myers, Lee County property appraiser. He was also president of the 1992 Save Our Homes Constitutional Amendment Initiative and currently is President of Save Our Homes/Portability, Inc.

Brian Yablonski, Tallahassee, vice president, Public Affairs, St. Joe Company. He previously served as director of policy and deputy chief of staff for Gov. Bush.

Non-voting legislative members: Sen. Mike Haridopolos, R-Melbourne, Sen. Gwen Margolis, D-Miami Beach, Rep. Frank Peterman, Jr., D-St. Petersburg, Rep. Ray Sansom, R-Fort Walton Beach.

Susan Skelton, executive director (skelton.susan@leg.state.fl.us) (850) 921-8905.

## Powertools

*Continued from Page 1*

Board members, she added, "must remain vigilant to recognize new technologies when they emerge and put in place policies that not only allow these new resources to be used, but used in a productive and appropriate way. We all agree that our students and our schools must be held to high standards – and that we all must work to help our students and our schools do their very best."

She then launched into the second part of her goal as president. "I have a challenge for each of you. In your districts you have technology programs that are innovative and are helping students to learn and motivating

students to do their best. I want you to share these ideas with us. During the next year we will be giving two awards out each month for the most innovative technological idea or program used in a school for that month. One award will go to a small school district and one to a large school district (and we will). . . promote the monthly winners any way possible to make positive news.

"Start thinking of how you're using power tools for schools in your district and get ready to shamelessly promote your best and most innovative project with us as the best power tool program in one of your schools," she added.

"We all agree that education can be the most powerful of all tools – the one thing that can cross cultural, ethnic and financial boundaries and can help lift the next generation even higher than where we are today."

# From the Executive Director

By **WAYNE BLANTON**

## Tax reform is far from over; Reform group begins meeting



**WAYNE BLANTON**

(See Page 3 for complete list of commission members)

**W**ith all the hoopla recently over tax reform measures and a special legislative session to deal with property taxes, what has gone relatively unnoticed is an organization that could have a major impact on Florida's future budgetary and taxation process. What this group of men and women will decide over the next few months will be with us long after the furor over property taxes has died down. . .like for the next 20 years.

Many of you, I'm sure, have already guessed what I'm talking about: the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission (TBRC), a 29-member body (includes four legislators who don't have a vote on the commission) which has begun recently holding monthly meetings. What makes this group so important is the fact it can place constitutional amendments relating to tax or budget issues on the November, 2008 ballot without legislative approval.

In light of the recently passed property tax reform measure, which rolls back property taxes to 2006-07 levels and the proposed constitutional amendment the Legislature passed which will appear on the Jan. 29, 2008 ballot which substantially increases the homestead exemption, the actions of this commission takes on a renewed—and vital—importance. All eyes, or at least the eyes of everyone—cities, counties, school districts—which rely on tax dollars, will be focused on this commission.

The commission was originally established by constitutional amendment in 1988 and met for the first time in 1990. Changes adopted by voters in 1998 called for the commission to meet again in 2007 and every 20 years thereafter to examine the state budgetary process, the revenue needs and the expenditure processes of the state, the appropriateness of the State's tax structure; governmental productivity and efficiency; and review the ability of state and local government to tax and adequately fund governmental operations and capital facilities.

The Commission, chaired by former House Speaker Allan Bense from Panama City, has full authority to place constitutional amendments on the ballot. These amendments, if any, would be voted on in the 2008 general election. Its proposed constitutional amendments must be submitted by May 4, 2008.

A couple of the changes that came out of the 1990-92 commission included the 72-hour waiting period before the Legislature could adopt a budget and creation of the budget stabilization fund that mandated a reserve fund equal to five percent of the state's total general revenue.

The commission has already held several meetings, with others scheduled for July and August in Tallahassee. After

that, the commission will begin traveling the state, holding public hearings. Those dates haven't yet been set. (But you can keep tabs on the commission at its web site, [www.floridatbrc.org](http://www.floridatbrc.org) or at FSBA's site, [www.fsba.org](http://www.fsba.org).)

The commission will begin drafting its recommendations between December and February. In March and April it will then debate the proposals, settling by May 4 on the amendments it will place on the November, 2008 ballot.

It is important—no, it is critical—that school board members attend these TBRC meetings. You must have input because the amendments this group puts on the ballot could affect school funding for the next 20 years.

One of the first items on the commission's plate is to develop an alternative plan if the constitutional amendment regarding homestead exemption doesn't pass in January. That amendment, part of the Legislature's recently adopted property tax reform measures, would offer homesteaded property owners a choice: They could keep their current Save Our Homes protection that caps annual assessment increases at three percent. Or they could accept a larger increase in the \$25,000 homestead exemption. Under the amendment, it would rise to 75% of the first \$200,000 of property value and 15 percent of the next \$300,000.

"I just don't want to wake up on Jan. 30 if it's not successful, and we've done nothing," Mr. Bense said at one of the earlier TBRC meetings.

If this amendment passes, it could cost school districts \$1.8 billion. The Legislature has promised to hold us harmless, but where are lawmakers going to find that much money? Adding to those problems is the recently announced billion dollar shortfall in the 2007-08 budget. So already, the state is going to have to start cutting its current budget.

That's why I'm encouraging school board members to attend as many of these TBRC meetings as possible. Actions from this commission may counter-balance or improve on what the Legislature attempted to do with its tax reform legislation.

*Dr. Blanton is executive director of the Florida School Boards Association.*

### Upcoming Events

**July 11-14**

NSBA Southern Region Conference, San Antonio, Texas

**December 4-7**

FSBA Annual Joint Conference, Tampa

## 'The Future is Now' at FSBA Spring Conference

If you wanted to know the latest from Tallahassee on property tax reform, the place to be was Tampa. That was the site in June for FSBA's Spring Conference that, coincidentally, was being held at the same time as the legislative special session on property taxes. (See Pages 2 and 4 for more information on tax reform.)

FSBA Executive Director Wayne Blanton followed the happenings in the state Capitol and quickly relayed the news back to Tampa, which was then passed on to FSBA members. That was just one of the benefits of this year's conference with the theme, "The Future is Now." It also saw the installation of new officers, a keynote speech by New York teacher Kay Toliver, legislative briefings on what lawmakers did during their regular session, and a talk from Dr. Rudy Crew, Miami-Dade County superintendent, on "Schooling and Globalization."

Andrea Messina, Charlotte County School Board and chair of FSBA's Federal Relations Network Subcommittee was also on hand to give members the latest on the No Child Left Behind Act.

Below are just a few of the pictorial highlights from this year's conference.



*A friendly welcome for FSBA's new president comes from Jack Lamb, a former FSBA president, who also presents Jeanne Dozier with the traditional bouquet of roses.*

*Incoming President Jeanne Dozier welcomes one of the speakers at this year's Spring Conference, Dr. Rudy Crew, superintendent of Miami-Dade County School District.*



*Winner of this year's President's Award from Sue Hershey, right, is Andrea Messina, Charlotte County, who chaired FSBA's Federal Relations Network Subcommittee this year.*



*New officers for FSBA  
Jack Lamb, FSBA's past president, Hillsborough County School Board, swears in FSBA's 2007-08 officers, from left: Lee Swift, treasurer, Charlotte County; Sue Hershey, immediate past president, Martin County; Georgia "Joy" Bowen, vice president, Leon County; Beverly Slough, president-elect, St. Johns County; and Jeanne Dozier, president, Lee County.*

# *We thank the sponsors of our Annual Spring Conference June 13-15, 2007*

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