

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tennessee Board Members Travel to Washington to Discuss Public Education

Fourteen Tennessee school board members and members of the TSBA staff joined more than 700 school board and state school boards' association leaders from across the country to ask Congress to support public school children this year. School board advocates were in Washington, D.C., to take part in the National School Boards Association's (NSBA) 39th annual Federal Relations Network (FRN) Conference, held Feb. 5-7, 2012.

Those Tennessee school board members and members of the TSBA staff who participated in the 39th FRN Conference included: **Bob Alvey, Jr.**, Jackson-Madison County; **David Baker**, Hardin County; **Wayne Blair**, Rutherford County; **Mike Evatt**, Hamilton County; **Renea Jones-Rogers**, Unicoi County; **Jeff Lee**, Warren County; **Horace Murphy, Jr.**, Clarksville/Montgomery County; **Mark North**, Metro/Davidson County; **David Pickler**, Shelby County; **Gracie Porter**, Metro/Davidson County; **Debbie Shedden**, Hawkins County; **Freda Williams**, Shelby County; **Dr. Nancy Williamson**, Oneida Special, and **Bill Zechman**, Warren County. **Dr. Tammy Grissom**, TSBA Executive Director and **Lee Harrell**, TSBA Director of Government and Labor Relations.



Pictured: (F) L-R: Mike Evatt, Hamilton County; Dr. Nancy Williamson, Oneida Special; Senator Alexander; Gracie Porter, Metro/Davidson County; Renea Jones-Rogers, Unicoi County; Senator Corker; Lee Harrell, TSBA; Debbie Shedden, Hawkins County; David Baker, Hardin County; (B) L-R: Freda Williams, Shelby County; Wayne Blair, Rutherford County; Mark North, Metro/Davidson County; Dr. Tammy Grissom, TSBA; Bob Alvey, Jr., Jackson-Madison County; David Pickler, Shelby County; Jeff Lee, Warren County; Bill Zechman, Warren County, and Horace Murphy, Jr., Clarksville/Montgomery County.

Tennessee's delegates, participants in the National School Boards Association's Federal Relations Network (FRN), a national grassroots legislative network, met with their members of Congress to urge them to make K-12 education a top priority this session and to learn about the most current federal policies and issues that will impact their schools. School board leaders had a number of opportunities to learn about the various congressional and cabinet-level efforts to improve teacher efficacy through innovative recruiting, retention, and compensation models.

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Two former school board members and current U.S. Representatives promised Federal Relations Network Conference participants that changes are on the way for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Michael Resnick, NSBA's Associate Executive Director for Federal Advocacy and Public Policy, led attendees at the FRN Conference through some of the details of the NCLB regulatory relief. FRN participants pushed for a quick reauthorization of the bill this year and Resnick said that bills in the House and Senate would need to be passed and moved to a conference committee quickly this spring to have a chance at passage this year. Charter schools, the Common Core State Standards Initiative and federal and state bullying rules were also topics discussed at this year's conference.

In preparation for their big day on Capitol Hill, board members attending the final general session heard from three members of Congress who reflected the diversity of political persuasions across the country.

Rep. Phil Roe, a former obstetrician raised in middle Tennessee, was full of stories that he shared willingly with the audience. "We're making it impossible with all rule and regulations to educate," said Roe. "The federal government does not do big very well...the thing I want to do and many of us want to do on both sides of the aisle is push as much of the decision making back down to the local level. No one understands your situation better than you do."

While the FRN Conference included a packed schedule of seminars, meetings, and workshops, board members believe their attendance at the event will pay dividends both in Washington and at home.

According to Lee Harrell, TSBA's Director of Government and Labor Relations, the FRN conference provides an opportunity for participants to attend several workshops regarding the process and happenings of the federal government. It also enables school board members to gather and discuss issues with other board members from across the country.

"While a few issues might be unique to Tennessee, most often the problems and obstacles we face are being encountered across the country," Harrell said. "This interaction allows us to learn from one another and enables us to be proactive when facing challenges."

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contact Lindsay Campbell at lcampbell@tsba.net**

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