

GR COMMITTEE REPORT TO DELEGATE ASSEMBLY (3.8.20)

2019 GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

WEA – **Phil Kaiser, Chair**

ESEA – Jan Giles

NEASN – Carmen Andrews

NSEA-R – Mecque Armstrong

NSEA Students – OPEN

UCN – Tricia Schumann

WESP – OPEN

Staff support: Chris Daly

2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NSEA had a strong, regular presence at the 80th Legislative Session from the Governor’s State of the State address in mid-January all the way through Sine Die on June 3rd. Members of NSEA’s ground team tracked nearly 200 bills, with 58 of 77 supported bills passing and 12 of the 13 bills we opposed failing. NSEA ground and member leaders testified at the table over 100 distinct times, submitting exhibits on about 50 unique bills. (See attached 80th Legislative Session Review for more detail on specific issues and bills engaged.) One highlight of the session was a focus on finding resources to provide 3% raises for educators across the state.

#FIX543

One of the concerning results of the 80th Legislative Session was the passage of SB543, the new school funding plan. NSEA opposed SB543 during session, raising concerns about: lack of new revenue in the plan; “freeze and squeeze” of most school district budgets; watering down of Zoom and Victory schools; multi-million giveaway to charter schools; anti-union end-fund balance provisions; and lack of educator voice in the development of the legislation. Since the end of session, NSEA has kept up our pressure on the new school funding plan, including maintaining a regular presence at the Commission on School Funding. We launched a campaign with Mi Familia Vota to call on the Commission and Legislature to draw attention to concerns that the new formula will decrease education equity for English learners and at-risk students currently attending successful Zoom and Victory Schools. We are now transitioning our targeting from the Commission on School Funding back to legislators. (See attached memo to the Commission on School Funding for more detail on our specific concerns.)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & GOVERNOR

NSEA has continued to enjoy a strong working relationship with Superintendent Jhone Ebert and has been building our relationship with Governor Steve Sisolak. Since taking office last year, NSEA has met privately with the Superintendent monthly and has also participated in the Superintendent’s monthly education stakeholder meetings. We have discussed issues such as the school funding plan, issues with implementation of new restorative justice program, and proper regulation of charter schools. Meanwhile, NSEA has continued our presence at meetings of NDE, including Board of Education, Teachers and Leaders Council, and the Commission on Professional Standards.

NSEA has also met with Governor Sisolak, Chief of Staff Michelle White, and Policy Director Allison Combs. In addition to discussing SB543, we have discussed the status of bargaining educator raises across the state, and the potential for new school revenue.

INTERIM EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Interim Education Committee has now been meeting since earlier this year. NSEA member Brittney Miller is Chair of the committee. NSEA has been engaging the committee on charter school regulation, class size reduction, student assessments, and other important issues.

SCHOOL REVENUE

On March 5th, Educate Nevada Now filed litigation against the state on the insufficiency of education funding. NSEA has been in conversations with ENN about this lawsuit for many months and plans to file an amicus brief in support of the legislation. Several of the plaintiffs in the suit are educators, and at least one is a current member of NSEA.

Earlier this year, the Clark County Education Association introduced two ballot initiatives. The first would increase the gaming tax rate from 6.75% to 9.75%. This measure would generate an estimated \$340M/year. The second measure would raise the Local School Support Tax from 2.6% to 4.1% (increasing the state sales tax rate to 8.35%). This measure would raise just over \$1B/year.

NSEA has not taken a formal position on these measures, however, we have publicly expressed concern that CCEA is moving forward on their own, which is not a winning strategy. We also have expressed concern about the sources of funds and have pointed to our focus on building a winning coalition to pass revenue. For more than a year, NSEA has been a part of Fund Our Future, a coalition of parent, student, teacher and education partners determined to ensure Nevada public schools have sufficient funds. We also have been working on the revenue subcommittee of the America Votes table to do the groundwork to move revenue measures. NSEA has also been in communication with the Governor's office, the Speaker, business representative, and strategic partners about the political climate for passing new revenue.

2020 PRESIDENTIAL CAUCUS

The Nevada Democratic Caucus took place on February 22nd. NSEA worked closely with the NEA on member engagement for the caucus, and we also partnered with the Nevada Democratic Party to make sure the caucus operated as smoothly as possible. NSEA's Las Vegas office served as an Early Caucus location, open from February 15th to 18th. We had more than 2500 people vote early at our caucus site.

With no endorsement from the NEA in the election, NSEA was able to engage with most candidate campaigns, raising the voice of educators and discussing critical education and labor issues.

2020 ENDORSEMENTS

The NSEA TIP Board of Director effectuated endorsements of 17 incumbent members of the State Assembly late last year. We have been engaged in the endorsement process in the remaining legislative districts, along with seats for the Nevada Supreme Court, State Board of Education, and NSHE Board of Regents. The GR Committee has developed candidate questionnaires and will be interviewing statewide candidates, while local teams conduct interviews legislative candidates and any local candidates in races of interest.

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The NSEA GR Committee has been involved in the creation of NSEA's 2021 Legislative Priorities, including conducting a large survey of membership on relevant issues. As of 3.8, we have received over 600 responses to this survey. Delegates will be able to review and provide input on the draft Priorities document at Delegate Assembly.