

2010 REPORT ON THE NSBA WASHINGTON DC CONFERENCE

I would like to thank my colleagues for their support for me to attend the NSBA Conference. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet with more than 900 other School Committee Members from all over the country. Not only did I attend as a MASC Div. II Chair but also had the pleasure of representing the City of Medford as a School Committee Member along with the rest of the nation.

My report is a breakdown of workshops I attended and participated in during the conference. Also included into the report is the day at the capital and meeting with our congressional delegation and their staff.

As you can see I have brought you back a few items from the conference but more importantly the catalogue “Educate Our Children Today For A Strong Tomorrow” explaining in detail the materials we covered in the workshops. The catalogue also provides a breakdown of some of the key educational votes and how the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate voted. Along with your packages are the guides to the 111th Congress with the names of all the Senate Committees and the House Committees. Included in detail is a listing of names, numbers, and e-mails to contact our congressional representatives. The packages have the folders of advocating issues we left with all the representatives and senators that NSBA support. We also spoke about the issues MASC supports and you are encouraged to look them on their website www.masc.org.

NSBS – FEDERAL RELATIONS NETWORKING CONFERENCE

Setting the Stage for Congress

The federal role in K-12 education is changing.

Anne Bryant the Executive Director NSBA: Stated that the timing for this year’s FRN is just right. The President’s budget happens to be coming out tomorrow. We have to make sure the President’s budget match his words. Without the Stimulus Package we will not be as relatively okay as we are today. The future is the problem! These times demand leadership!!

NSBA’S view of Pay for Performance: They believe this must be designed at the local level.

A challenge for us: Reach out to local school boards in our state; get them involved!!

Mike Resnick the Associate Executive Director NSBA: ESEA must be reauthorized now. This year is a volatile election. Individual members are now more likely to follow your individual concerns. NCLB: Accountability changes are needed. Stimulus protection money is unlikely to continue. The current system for funding education does not match the mandates. As we look to the 2010/2011 school year, most of the states stimulus money has already been spent. Our advocacy is to properly fund education. If we had 1% of the money that we recently gave Wall Street not to fail we could assure our kids that they would not fail either!

Some may say it makes no sense to increase funding until ESEA is reauthorized. There will be some members of Congress who advocate an unnecessary expansion of Federal control. NSBS advocates for locally controlled schools. We will be the “eyes, ears and voices” of our constituents on Tuesday.

Dr. Norman Ornstein: Political and Policy Commentary

A year ago we had the historic inauguration of Obama. As he stood at the podium, he had 70% approval rating. Today the public is still restless and anxious for change. Will 2010 be a repeat of the many actions of Congress in 2009? President Obama’s recent State of the Union Address was a wake-up call for the fiscal challenges ahead.

RTTT (reminder it was a \$4.35 billion grant)

At this session we heard from a panel of various state associations and their attempts at filing.

Arizona: Governor was aggressive. Governor hired a Superintendent to write the grant. The Gates Foundation was involved. The Governor made it clear that the local level would make recommendations if approved for the grant. “We’ll probably be in Phase Two.” This state has over 500 Charter Schools and 230 school districts; 60% of whom signed on.

Michigan: Driven by legislative Chairs in House and Senate, as well as the State Superintendent not the Governor. “We’re not likely to get it in the first round.” “I don’t think the State did much to outreach to local districts.” 90% of members signed on (Superintendent and Board President ONLY). 41 out of 700 Unions signed on (MEA advised them not to sign).

New York: Their process was “pretty gut wrenching.” It was stated that it was about the same process as Arizona. “The Governor does not have a staff that is very helpful” they have a New Commissioner and a new Chancellor. This would have meant up to \$700 million for them! Their application is hundreds of pages long. The MOU was communicated “a couple of times.” 600 of 700+ districts signed Unions were very “sporadic”. The main point of opposition had to do with Charter School expansion. RTTT application “was not a transparent process.”

Oregon: Could get \$170 million. Design team was put in place by state. However the members are “unknown to them”. “It was difficult to find out what they were doing.” Superintendents and teachers didn’t have enough time to understand. Their legislature was NOT IN SESSION to be involved at all! They only meet 6 months out of the year. Most Unions did not sign on.

Preparing for Capital Hill
Ready to Learn / Ready for Life
Early Childhood Education

RTTT some money will improve transition between pre K & K. NSBA formed a Pre-K Committee in 2007 over 300 members currently on board but they are seeking more membership. You can review their work to date on web site: www.nsba.org/prekcommittee or www.nsba.org/advocacy

Child Nutrition

The Child Nutrition Act has been up for reauthorization but was extended in 2009.

The First Lady will be authorizing a childhood obesity campaign this week.

Education Technology: Telecommunications Act also up for re-authorization
EET funding for example apply for smart boards. U.S. DOE is developing a new National Education Technology Plan which should be coming out soon.

ESEA Reauthorization -Local School Board Issues and Priorities:

There has been a commitment to reauthorize this year. We’ll know in the next month or two if this will ACTUALLY happen. Healthcare, Economy and Educations are the President’s top three priorities. Three scenarios of ESEA are possible restructuring: Major restructuring, Modifications and/ or Temporary.

NSBA feels that Charter Schools should be sponsored and monitored by local school districts. The President’s Budget has a 0% line for Title IV (drug-free schools & school resource officers) later on that day the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan was asked this question and it “appears” they are in other lines of the budget.

Education Funding & the 2011 Budget:

President Obama asked for a \$4 billion increase, one billion to be contingent on ESEA reauthorization. This represents a 6.2% increase. No increase for Title I, disadvantaged students to stay at \$14.5 billion. Title I School Improvement Grants increased by \$3.5 million. Asked for \$250 million increase referencing SPED, but this will barely keep us at 17%!!! Tech Ed level funded. Safe and Drug Free Schools which are now called Safe Schools and Citizenship Education lost funding in past years. Referencing ARRA \$67.6 billion of the Stimulus money has been obligated. Four ARRA Reform priorities:

Move toward common standards & assessments/Teacher/Principal quality

Data systems (track individual students)/More support for struggling schools

The President's goal by 2020 America will have the highest proportion of college graduates of any country. There are \$650 million in competitive grants. In his new budget requests he wants to add an additional \$500 million. Large state deficits are expected thru Fiscal year 2012. An example, ARRA money will be mostly used up by end of 2010.

Jobs for Main Street Act: (House passed 12/09) would equal \$23 billion "Education Jobs Fund" Senate is now negotiating similar Bill (\$18 billion). We must urge our Senators to support this!

Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA): H.R. 3221 passed in House 9/17/09 equals \$4 billion in direct grants to school districts for repairs and modernization. \$8 billion over 8 years for early learning challenge fund, example pre-K programs. This topic is now in the Senate for discussion.

IDEA: The President's goal is to have it up to 40% by 2015 versus the actual 17% today. Senate 1652 IDEA Full Funding Act would have us at 40% by 2016. H.R. 3758 Massachusetts Representatives Frank, McGovern & Delahunt are already on board.

President's Fiscal year 2011 Budget increase:

\$4 billion to expand funding for RTTT; \$1 billion contingent upon Congress re-authorizing ESEA (NCLB)

\$1.65 billion for Neighborhood Programs for Drop Out Prevention, School Improvement Grants, and Charter Schools.

Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan:

The following are some of the statements he made. "One year ago the economy was in an education catastrophe." "Today the Recovery Act saved over 300 thousand education jobs.....The President believes we need to educate our way to a better economy.....Our country's economic security depends on it." "The President is committed to re-authorizing ESEA. One of his goals will give local educators the flexibility to do what is needed.... It should not come from Washington." Example local control....."We will be creating a limited role at the Federal level."

"If we want to be smarter about accountability, we must factor in student growth in progress."

\$3 billion increase in education is the most any President has ever authorized. Plus the additional \$1 billion post re-authorization. "This is the biggest investment since the GI Bill."

New loan repayment plan recommended by President's plan. \$9.3 billion over 10 years, birth to K.

"K-12 agenda can be summed up in one word: Reform." The President is asking for an additional \$1.35 billion for 3rd round RTTT. More attention to Principal leadership, "Because NCLB narrowed the curriculum, we're looking to expand it again."

Capital Hill:

We presented MASC's and NSBA's concerns. The notes reflect a portion of what was discussed. We had an appointment with Congressman Markey's office and met with his legislative aide, Jillian and intern Pete. We highlighted Rep. Sciortino's Amendment to Mass Ed Reform referencing student mobility. I elaborated on concerns relative to Massachusetts Charter Schools.

We met with Congressman Neal's aid Sarah Bontempo. We again presented our concerns of student mobility. Spoke about IDEA funding to get him to sign on. Also spoke about Jobs for Main Street Act supported by Rep. Neal which is very important to saving teacher jobs in Massachusetts especially now since our stimulus money has depleted.

Met with Congressman Capuano and five other members of MASC joined me for a 45-minute discussion of educational concerns.

He told us that Jobs for Main Street Act had no chance (the only Congressman to state this to us, and we later heard the same from Senator Kerry's office). When we explained what Norman Ornstein's prediction were of ESEA re-auth "being "dumped", he believed Dr. Ornstein's predictions are to be usually on target.

We sat down with Congressman Tsongas legislative assistant, Aparna Krishnaswamy.

We again delivered our concerns relative to student mobility. She asked us what were our "priorities" referring to ESEA and we informed her that we felt "local control" would be the best solution. She also asked our opinion of RTTT. Charter School concerns were additionally addressed.

We met with Senator Kerry's aide Alexandra Nunez. We spoke about the reauthorization of ESEA. Her response "I would love to give you a better sense.....There's not a whole lot of agreement on how to fix those problems.....I don't see how it can happen this year. There's a real lack of cohesion." "Tell us what's really broken." She then went on to say that "RTTT was very informative to most of our members. Example that 40 states signed on showing that additional funding is needed, no matter what the terms. That signal to us sent us quite the message. When asked about the Senator's view of Jobs for Main Street Act, she replied "We're getting a lot of push back. That won't pass!"

She encouraged us to reach out to Senator Brown. However at the time he was still in Massachusetts and that was not possible. A few of the past MASC members did go to Senator Kennedy's staff (Senator Kirk) to thank them for all their years of service and assistance it was a very somber atmosphere.

In conclusion, I know that sitting at the table per say makes me look at my city in a different perspective. As I listened and observed other states fighting for all day kindergarten I sat there and said “we already offer this program”. When other states are just beginning to consider there is an obesity problem and trying to remove vending machines that sell “junk food” and “tonic” I sat there and said “we have been promoting this issue”. When other states are advocating for teacher professional days to help educate their staff, again I sat there saying “we have been working on this”. I can go on and give you more examples. However, please do not misunderstand. If you are asking yourselves is she saying we do not have any problems and everything is wonderful? No, what I am saying is, are we perfect? No way. Do we need to work harder to raise the bar higher each and everyday? Absolutely, but it makes me feel as a member of this committee we are on the right track. When all is said and done, it also opens up our eyes and ears even wider reconfirming the fact that when we discuss our Massachusetts issues they are not only our issues. These concerns and pressures are a NATIONAL situation and Washington seems as if they are finally paying attention. I am not stating things are going to pass ASAP, but it is truly imperative for us as towns, cities, districts, and states to come together and let our voices be heard. I believe it is vital when we have the opportunity to take part and give the City of Medford their say with the rest of the nation. To show our support and we are in this together. There is too much at stake and we need to keep on fighting.

I would also encourage our committee to send a thank you letter to Representative Markey and Senator Kerry’s office for their support.

Respectfully,
Ann Marie Cugno
MASC Div. II Chair/ Medford School Committee



Pictured left to right: Patrick Francomano (King Philip Reg.); Debra Bibeau, Immediate Past President (Amesbury); Kathleen Robey, President 2010 (Marlboro); Mary Jo Rossetti, Secretary-Treasurer (Somerville); Michael Gilbert (Whittier Voc. Tech.); Dorothy Presser, President-Elect (Lynnfield); Lisa Berry (Plainville); Penny Blackwell, Vice President (Upper Cape Cod Voc. Tech.); Ann Marie Cugno, Division II Chair (Medford)