



GOVERNING BOARD

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September 20, 2011

Dr. Chuck Essigs
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Janice Palmer
Director of Governmental Relations
Arizona School Boards Association
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Re: ASBA Request for Governing Board “Top Ten” Legislative Priorities

Dear Dr. Essigs and Ms. Palmer:

Thank you for the additional opportunity to provide input to ASBA regarding its legislative agenda following the June delegate assembly. We met on September 6 to review the compiled ASBA legislative priorities listing and have selected, as our “top ten”, the items checked in the attached form provided to us. We are also listing those items below, with some additional comments (shown in *italics*) where we felt them appropriate.

II. Local Control/Governance

- (4). Seek and support legislation that ensures that all public schools are funded and governed in a manner consistent with the Arizona Constitution's requirement of a general and uniform public school system, so that substantial disparities in the treatment of schools are not created by the law.

We wish to note that we believe this agenda statement should be much stronger. In particular, as we have described in our correspondence of September 6, 2011, because our State's Constitution goes beyond requiring a “general and uniform” public school system. We urge ASBA, in pursuing this agenda item, not to ignore the other significant provisions of the Constitution.

IV. Taxation/Revenues

- (1). Advocate structural change to Arizona's tax system to support funding for public education, other child support services, and a competitive business climate while opposing any change to the existing property tax structure unless a comprehensive tax reform proposal is implemented to adequately address the needs of public education.

While we support this item, we are concerned that ASBA would express a bias toward businesses – to the apparent detriment of homeowners, perhaps. We believe that ASBA should be advocating for schools and children and that a specific suggestion of protections for business not only exceeds ASBA's purpose, but suggests an inappropriate allegiance to a single faction of our common constituents.

- (3). Advocate for repeal of both private student tuition and public extracurricular tax credits with those funds to be dedicated to public education, while demanding additional accountability for student tuition organizations until ultimate repeal is accomplished.

- (9). Oppose the various Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) legislation.

Most Arizonans do not understand this type of legislation and can misunderstand a governmental body's opposition to it. By urging this item, we do not mean, of course, to suggest that taxpayers should not have rights. Taxpayers have inherent rights guaranteed to them by both our federal and state constitutions, and we do not ever wish to see those rights bridled or minimized in any way. Typical "TABOR" legislation does not establish rights for taxpayers, but rather, imposes long reaching restrictions upon future taxpayers and greatly hampers the ability of government to meet the needs of those taxpayers.

- (10). Oppose efforts to undercut voter approved measures.

V. Funding

- (2). Seek and support legislation that addresses issues related to school capital issues, including minimum building standards, new school construction, building renewal, and soft capital.

- (4). Seek and support legislation to adequately fund English Language Learners.

We wanted to suggest that "adequately" is a word with built-in "wiggle room" that has been grossly misused and misconstrued within our state's history of funding for public education in this state. Should we truly be seeking anything less than "fully" funding this important function of our schools? Should we not say what we truly mean?

- (5). Seek and support legislation to ensure full funding for inflation, especially in years in which the rate of inflation is greater than 2 percent and vigorously oppose at the legislature and in the courts any attempts to not fully fund at least the 2 percent inflation factor as approved by the voters in Proposition 301 (2000).

VI. Personnel

- (1). Seek and support legislation that provides increased funding for school personnel salaries.

In this regard, we believe that additional emphasis should be placed on pursuing opportunities for “performance pay” programs in both state and federal legislative schemes. The federal Teacher Incentive Fund program, for example (which our District is an participant in) provides significant opportunities for enhancement of teacher and school administrator compensation tied to enhancements of the educational program and increased student achievement.

ASBA should also strongly advocate for reinstatement of the Career Ladder Program -- a proven, well established performance pay program that at one time served the majority of teachers and students in this state. Under funded and denied to some district for years, the program has of course fallen under both legislative and legal attack that has operated to kill this undeniably valuable program. As an organization, we should urge restoration of the program.

VII. Federal Concerns

- (3). Urge the Arizona congressional delegation to ensure that adequate federal funds are available to support and sustain federally initiated supplemental programs such as Title 1, Title 2 and gifted programs as well as federally mandated programs and oppose efforts to make these programs into competitive grants.

Thank you again for this additional opportunity to provide input into the development of ASBA’s legislative agenda. We hope you will consider our comments in addition to our recommended priorities.

Sincerely,

Jeff Grant
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