

FASA Legislative Days
Tallahassee Florida
January 12-13, 2009

The executive director for OCASA, Bob Clark along with President Judy Frank and board members Pat Ramsey and Sheilla Johnson attended the two-day conference. We had the opportunity to meet with Scott Howat, the OCPS legislative representative to ensure that our efforts were in alignment with our districts priorities. With the assistance of Dr. Shelia Windom, principal of Richmond Heights Elementary we were able to meet individually with eight legislatures and/or their aids.

We met legislators during a special session. The regular session will be March 3-May 1, 2009. Follow up and support from our membership will be crucial to our effectiveness. Maintaining positive communication with our legislators between now and March is important. Communications let us develop strong, productive relationships with local legislators. Consistent interim communications serves two primary purposes. First, they establish us as the local expert on specific issues in education or on education in general. Second, they enable us to interact with legislators in a more meaningful way and in a more relaxed setting than is possible during Legislative Session. I encourage all of you to assist us with this consistent communication. They need to hear from all of us!

The following platform was shared with each legislator:

Provide Maximum Flexibility

- Allow maximum flexibility in using capitol outlay funds, educational or operational software supporting the classroom, and vehicle purchases
- Ensure local control of all educational employee salaries
- Return school board control of school start date

No New Unfunded Mandates

- No new voucher or performance pay programs
- Support language preventing SBE or Commissioner from developing and implementing new initiatives for school districts that require reprioritization of current district funds

Delay Implementation of Existing Mandates

- Place certain programs on hiatus until funding improves to at least the 07-08 original allocation levels and budget impacts are evaluated
- Physical Education, K-8 Virtual School, new High School grading Formula, MAP, SAC and School Recognition Bonus programs

Increase and Stabilize Revenue

- Support a joint resolution to participate in the internet and catalog sales tax compact
- Increase cigarette and alcohol taxes
- Designate new gaming revenues to K-12 Public Education

The following is a list of who were able to meet personally with and a brief summary of each meeting. At each meeting we offered our assistance and left our contact information:

Julie Fess, Legislative Assistant to Representative **Dean Canon** (District 35, Republican). Representative Cannon is the chairperson for the Finance and Tax Council and a member of the Joint Legislative Budget Commission, Rules and Calendar Council, House Office of Reapportionment and Government Accountability Act Council. Ms. Fess indicated that Dean Canon was in support of maximum flexibility and suggested that we see Representative Dorworth who would be authoring some legislation in that area.

Chris Dorworth (District 34, Republican). Representative Dorworth is the Vice Chair for the Military and Local Affairs Policy Committee and a member of the Economic Development and Community Affairs Policy Council, Finance and Tax Council, Public Safety and Domestic Security Policy Committee, State Universities and Private Colleges policy Committee and the Joint Committee on Public Counsel Oversight. Representative Dorworth shared that he would be working on legislative language that would support maximum flexibility.

Kurt Kelly (District 24, Republican). Representative Kelly was invited to join our table on Monday before he gave a keynote address. We discussed various educational issues and thanked him for his support. Representative Kelly is on the State and Community Colleges and Workforce Appropriations Committee, the State and Community Colleges and Workforce Policy Committee and the Economic Development Policy Committee.

Ryan Smith, Legislative Assistant to **Steve Crisafulli** (District 32, Republican). Representative Crisafulli is on the Agriculture and Natural resources Policy Committee, Economic Development Policy Committee, Elder Family Services Policy Committee, and the Joint Committee on Public Counsel Oversight. Mr. Smith listened and reviewed our platform. We found out he graduated from Coco Beach HS in the IB program so we explained how the class size amendment might negatively affect programs such as IB and AP.

Darren Soto (District 49, Democrat). Representative Soto had visited Pat Ramsey's school. He is on the Health and family Services Policy Council, Criminal and Civil Justice Appropriations Committee, Energy and Utilities Policy Committee and the Democratic ranking member on the Health care Services Policy Committee. Representative Soto was supportive and asked us our opinion on the new high school grading system and how we might respond to constituents who were concerned that we won't have money available if we need to build schools. We shared our concern that a GED would not be considered a measurement for graduation in the new policy. He discussed his hesitation with the GED component, and we shared that a GED is used for entry to colleges and that many of our brightest take the GED to gain access to post secondary schools or training. *He wanted us to speak to Representative Martin Kiar, who*

serves on several education committees, so he contacted him and walked us down to his office.

Martin “Marty” Kiar (District 97, Democrat). Representative Kiar serves on the Education Policy Council, Full Appropriations Council on Education and Economic Development, the Democratic Ranking Member on the PreK-12 Appropriations Committee, and the Democratic Ranking Member on the PreK-12 Policy Committee. Representative Kiar pledged his support on all of our educational issues. He asked each of us to have our families *email Representative Canon* letting him know that the state needs additional revenue and that they would support additional taxes.

Eric Eisnaugle (District 40, Republican). Representative Eisnaugle is a newly elected legislator. He is on the following committees, Civil Justice and Appropriations Committee, Governmental Affairs Policy Committee and Health Care Regulation Policy Committee. He was **very concerned** that school boards should be transparent with their budgets. When the public calls him he wants to be able to tell them we are not wasting money. Right now he feels like he cannot do that because he doesn’t have the facts. We promised him that we would share his concerns with Scott Howat and have Scott contact him to provide him with additional information.

Gary Siplin (19th District, Democrat). Senator Siplin serves on the following committees: Community Affairs, vice chair; Education Pre-K-12 Appropriations, Vice Chair; Governmental Oversight and Accountability, Vice Chair; Policy and Steering Committee on Energy; Committee on Ways and Means; Criminal Justice; Rules; Transportation; and Joint Legislative Committee on Everglades Oversight, Chair. Siplin is supportive of education. I know recently you saw that he was the only democrat to vote yes on the budget from the special session. I do not think he had much choice since he was on the committee that helped provide the budget. He will be a key person for the regular session because of his positions. We need to make sure he gets lots of phone calls and letters because that will solidify his willingness to step out there for us and push for new revenue.

Stephen L Precourt (District 41, Republican). Representative Precourt is a supporter of “School Choice” and tightening the belt to solve this budget deficit. He does not support anything that is connected with the “T” word. He said that we have a huge population of senior citizens and they are not in agreement with more funding for education. His office is at 310 South Dillard Street in Winter Garden. He serves on the following committees: Education Policy Council; Full Appropriations Council on Education and Economic Development; Economic Development Policy Committee, Vice Chair; State Universities and Private Colleges Policy Committee, Chair. He also told us that maybe President Obama will give the state money and we will not have to worry about it. He is definitely one we need to contact.