

# *FASA Legislative Workshop*

## *January 20, 2007*

*The FASA Legislative Workshop previously held in Tampa was relocated to Orlando this year. The workshop was co-hosted by the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA) and the Tampa Bay Area Coalition (TBAC). FASA provided the speakers: Senator Steve Wise and Representative Dennis Baxley, TBAC provided the coordination, registration, and food and beverage. Orange County Schools and Orange County Association of School Administrators (OCASA), a member of the TBAC, provided the facility at Mid Florida Tech.*

*Jim Warford, Executive Director of FASA welcomed attendees and discussed FASA's goal to "make our state's educational administrators' voices heard." The new FASA Website [www.fasa.net](http://www.fasa.net) was introduced with new changes that include the School Zone, a real time opportunity for all administrators to voice their opinions immediately on issues pending in the legislature. FASA can use this current data to represent the opinion of school administrators all over the state when lobbying or testifying on critical school issues that are being debated during the legislative session. Furthermore, he reminded the group that accountability results from the last six years reveal that 80+ percent of schools in Florida are graded "good" or "excellent." **Administrators need to become "agents of change, not the object of change."** Public school leaders have the answers for making long-term improvements in our schools and FASA is leading the charge together with the legislature to meet these goals.*

*Juhan Nixon, FASA Lobbyist welcomed the group and distributed a document entitled "Grassroots Lobbying." He also introduced our speakers Senator Steve Wise, Republican representing parts of Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties and Chair of Education PreK-12 Appropriations. Senator began by sharing his experiences in education and how he became involved in politics. He spent 23 years in education at Florida Community College in Jacksonville before running for the House of*

*Representatives. Term limits required him to leave the House of Representatives, but he ran for the Senate and won the seat in Northeast Florida and continues to serve in leadership positions. He elaborated on a number of educational programs he sponsored preK-12, including a Middle School program designed to help keep the best and brightest students from going out of State after graduating from high school. He has worked for three years in conjunction with the electric company in Duval County to allow residents to send donations with their utility bills for pre-paid college for students on free or reduced lunch.*

*Representative Dennis Baxley, Republican representing part of Marion county and Speaker Pro tempore 2006-08 told us that his experiences as a legislator have taught him to be a better listener. He feels his most important job is being a dad to his five children (one of them blind) and his grandchildren. He thanked those educators for their involvement in the education of his children. He challenged the group to agree to disagree when necessary to work together and get the job done to build a great future for Florida's students. He challenged educators to "remain at the table, so as not to end up on the menu." Sound economic futures cannot be built if the next generation is not taught what they need to know to compete in the global market. Accountability is not pleasant, but it is vital.*

*During a question and answer period the attendees were reminded of the following:*

- There are 120 House members and 40 Senators. The legislators agreed that "All politics are local" and our legislators want to hear from people they know – get to know the legislators personally.*
- The best ways to get to know or communicate with a legislator are – work/volunteer in their campaign, contribute to their campaign, visit them at their home office, when speaking to them identify yourself and your district, figure out who taught their children and get them to talk to the legislator for you, 95% of the folks who make legislative appointments want something – offer to help without asking for anything, and after the race get to know the victor – whether you voted for them or not. Don't write people off just because you weren't in their camp, especially on educational issues.*
- Administrators throughout Florida want to someday see the 1.6% multiplier for retirement benefits increased to at least 2%. John*

Miliziano asked, what are the chances of this becoming law? It will probably never pass due to the tremendous budget impact because it is such a large group; it would never get out of the Operations Committee. However, the Health Insurance Subsidy (HIS) supplement bill filed by Senator Lawson and Bob Allen in the House may be an alternative.

- We are asking that administrators be treated the same as teachers regarding the extension of the DRQP for 8-years. Do you think it will pass? Senator Wise supports the DRQP extension because administrators are retiring in large numbers and we have a problem finding new leadership. Within the next three and a half years, 60% of Florida's educational administrators will be eligible to retire. Of all the issues mentioned, the DRQP Extension is most likely to pass. Actuarial studies on the Drop Extension show it won't cost the State. Walter Pierce of Palm Beach County reminded that every time we lose an administrator, we pull a teacher out of the classroom.
- Fifty-four of the sixty-seven school districts in the state have early start times. What are the chances of reexamining last years School Calendar legislation (Senator Posey's bill SB 148 – Brevard County)? Debatable issues will always come back. There are thirty-six new members in the House and they will be approached with this issue. Save our Summers organization gained momentum that had nothing to do with operating schools. They are, however, part of the discussion. It is not an easy struggle to get it back on the table, but it will be back. Representative Joe Pickens' idea was to make an "opt out" chance for counties whose communities were in agreement.
- What are the next legislative steps for Secondary School Redesign Initiative? Bill Daggett will address the issue on February 14, 2007.
- STAR has diminished relationships at schools between unions, administrators and teachers; it has caused friction at the school level, what can be done? STAR Hearings are before the Appropriations Committee the first week of February. Contact your legislators to give them input, but be positive. Pat Ramsey-Baney, President OCAIA commented on

*“STAR and the demoralization it causes: Teachers need support and administrators are trying to provide that support. Teachers deal with kids with all capabilities, not just brilliant students. Give schools the money so they can divvy it up where it is needed. Intentions may have been good, but the mission has failed.”* Senator Wise encouraged Ms. Ramsey-Baney to come to Tallahassee to testify regarding STAR.

John Nixon introduced Vern Crawford representing the Florida Education Legislative Liaisons (FELL) – they have been working together for thirty-one years and the group includes a conglomerate of associations and those with educational involvement. They help put a face on concerns and attempt to humanize issues for legislators. Current representatives from school districts across the state are recognized in Tallahassee. Each person should capitalize on any relationship that they have with a legislator to make their issues and concerns known. Issues of interest to educators this year are: STAR, School Reform, Class Size, School Grades, and Teacher Salaries.

Jim Warford adjourned the meeting by reminding the group that *politics are local and Action Alerts are only helpful if you respond.*

