

TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVOCATE



**"What does it
all meme?"**
pull-out poster
pgs. 4-5

LEGISLATIVE REPORT | December 31, 2018 | VOLUME 4, ISSUE 9

New state leadership brings opportunities, familiar fights

Historic change is happening in the state capitol. A new governor and more than a quarter of the General Assembly will take their places in January as newly elected officials. Along with new lawmakers are new leaders in the state Senate and House of Representatives. There is hope that the goals and needs of educators, students and parents across Tennessee will be addressed by the incoming General Assembly and administration.

Governor-elect Bill Lee won a convincing general election after a bruising Republican primary. While education did not play a central role in either contest, Lee did outline priorities and perspectives on education.

As the owner of one of the largest heating and plumbing contractors in the state, Lee did emphasize the importance of vocational education. He highlighted this focus in one of his campaign commercials where Lee welded a pipe.

"For way too long, we've told people you got to go to college—don't go into the trades," Lee said, noting his company trained more than 1,000

skill tradesmen in 10 years. "I don't just talk about vocational training. We've actually done it, and we've helped a lot of men and women—families—make really good lives for themselves. We're going to do that all over Tennessee," he said.

Lee has floated a proposal that every Tennessee student take at least one vocational course, whether it be computer coding or carpentry. It is a marked change from the college-bound emphasis of the Haslam administration.

"There is real opportunity for the incoming governor to connect with teachers about meeting his goals," said TEA President Beth Brown. "He has called into question the current number one educational goal of the state—test scores. Vocational courses don't fit into the test-score goals. I think Lee understands that as long as high-stakes decisions are tied to test scores, his CTE goals will not be met."

New leadership
cont. page 8



Gov-elect Lee showed he was a welder in a key campaign commercial.

Faith leaders join fight against anti-public education efforts

A statewide network of faith leaders has been working across Tennessee ahead of the 111th General Assembly, advocating for adequate public school funding and lifting up public education as a moral good and "a basic, core, fundamental, social-justice expression in society."

Pastors for Tennessee Children is part of a national movement of pastors and religious leaders of all faiths united to promote public schools as a public trust.

"An overwhelming majority of Tennessee teachers is involved in a local church — likely leading a Sunday school class, counseling youth, leading children's ministry, chairing committees, or serving as a deacon or an elder," said Rev. Charles Foster Johnson, founder and executive director of Pastors for Children. "When we as pastors need a job done, we go to you — to our teachers, so I'm asking you to go to your pastor in your community and tell them we are convening all the ministers in

Faith leaders
cont. page 8

20/20 VISION goals for funding and testing are core to legislative efforts

TEA's 20/20 Vision goals are to raise education funding to the Southeast average and stop high-stakes decisions based on standardized testing by the year 2020.

INCREASE FUNDING

While the General Assembly has increased education funding by \$1.5 billion over the past seven years, Tennessee remains behind many neighboring states on investment per student with many needs still unmet.

To get to the regional education funding average for investment per student, the state will need to increase funding by \$800 million, a historic but reachable sum.

Such a funding increase can be

accomplished without raising taxes or cutting other important government services. It takes the political will created only by an organized movement of educators and parents pushing for funding.

The first step in that movement is knowing state fiscal facts.

Most state sales, business and other taxes are dedicated to the state general fund, and approximately one-third of this fund goes to K-12 education.

20/20 Vision update
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THE STRONGEST VOICE FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

2019 resolutions lead to 20/20 Vision

By TEA President Beth Brown



For some, the moment was quiet; for others, it may have passed amidst loud celebration. Regardless of what we were doing when 2018 slid into 2019, all of us received the promise of new beginnings and new opportunities.

Many of us establish our intentions for the new year by pledging that things will be better and that we will do better. Unfortunately, our good intentions often fall by the wayside. To avoid the inevitable guilt that accompanies broken resolutions, I looked this year for tips to setting resolutions that will stick. What I learned helped me

know that I'm on the right track in my pursuit of 20/20 Vision.

Having more resources in my classroom and less focus on testing will allow me to concentrate on what's best for my students.

We should set resolutions that are positive rather than punitive. TEA's 20/20 Vision campaign focuses on increasing investment in our students and eliminating high-stakes decisions based on standardized tests. Working to accomplish that goal is

good for both me and my students!

We should connect our resolutions with our why. I became a teacher because I wanted to inspire my students to love learning. Having more resources in my classroom and less focus on testing will allow me to concentrate on what's best for my students: more time for one-on-one attention and instruction, learning critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and creativity through a well-rounded curriculum.

We should set goals that are in line with our values and then "chop" them into manageable chunks to make sure that they are reasonable and attainable. TEA has created an Action Network form that allows me to pledge that "I'm In!" and shows me what actions I can take to help us achieve 20/20 Vision. I select which actions fit my schedule and my comfort level.

We should find a partner (or partners) to support us and work with us. I cannot accomplish 20/20 Vision alone. I am counting on other educators, parents, students, administrators, retired educators, elected officials, and any other community member who cares about public schools to join me in this campaign.

Finally—and I promise I'm not making this up—we should think of a theme for our resolutions. Seeing clearly, staying focused, having 20/20 Vision for Tennessee's public schools: it's right on the money.

Happy New Year, TEA! As Oprah Winfrey says, "Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right." Let's get 2019 right by working collectively to achieve 20/20 Vision!

Complete the "I'm in!" form online at TEAteachers.org/2020Vision, and add the "I'm in!" Facebook frame to your profile picture by visiting the TEA Facebook page.



Let's talk about "choice" in public education

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder



Throughout his campaign and in recent interviews, Governor-elect Bill Lee has been very clear where he stands on privatizing public education in Tennessee.

He uses the right talking points with warm, pretty phrases like "parent choice," but under the nice words is the ugly truth of how damaging privatization schemes are for Tennessee children.

Every state that has implemented a voucher plan has experienced serious issues ranging from low student performance to fraud.

If it is more choice that Mr. Lee is after, I have some ideas for him that don't involve putting our students or our public schools at risk.

How about more choice and autonomy for our dedicated educators who best understand the unique needs of the students in their classrooms? Yes, we hear a lot about "teaching is a calling," and while that is true, it is also a profession that requires proper training and expertise. The state should set the standards, but then leave it to the teachers to choose the most effective way to instruct their students.

State leaders should choose to increase investment in our public schools and bring Tennessee up to the Southeast average in per-student investment. Increased state funding would give local school districts more choices in how to properly resource their classrooms and adequately pay educators.

There could also be more choices for school improvement plans. The community schools model TEA has been championing has a proven record of transforming public schools. Every community in Tennessee is unique. Parents, educators and community members should be able to choose the resources and services needed to maximize the potential of their neighborhood schools.

Another choice parents and educators would welcome is increased access to Pre-K programs in our public school systems. Effective and affordable Pre-K programs set students up for future academic success. All students should have access to a quality Pre-K program.

"Choice" that is designed to undermine our system of strong public schools and leave students behind is the problem.

This is just a short list of the many, many choices educators and parents would welcome in public education. The important thing to note is that every single idea listed above would lift up ALL students, empower ALL teachers and improve the performance of students, educators and schools.

"Choice" is not bad. "Choice" that is designed to undermine our system of strong public schools and leave students behind is the problem.

Mr. Lee, when it comes to these dangerous privatization schemes, I hope you will say "No, thanks," and instead favor choices that will actually improve public education for all Tennessee children.

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UniServ Staff contact information can be found on page 6.

Together, we must step out of our comfort zones

By Jeremy McLaughlin, Sullivan County EA



Each January, tradition dictates that we search for some New Year's resolution to complete. After a holiday season typically full of too much rich food, my resolutions

tend to focus on dropping a few pounds or riding my bike some more. While those are great goals, I end up falling off the wagon a few weeks in. It's too cold to ride my bike in January. I really don't like salads. The dedication that these resolutions require never seems to materialize long term. I've got other things to do; I can't ride my bike now. Taking time just for me is hard work.

I'm sure you can relate. As a teacher, I get to "me" after I've written my next lesson plan and the grading is done, but the grading is never done and there's always another lesson. Each year we put ourselves last and focus too much on what we're doing for others. That's what makes teachers happy anyway, when we help someone else. We're always busy with this work, so what I'm about to propose might sound crazy.

Do one more thing.

Let's be honest. You were going to do it anyway. The soup kitchen needs one more volunteer. The PTO needs you because you're both a Parent and a Teacher. We fall back to these worthy but predictable causes because they're known quantities. We're comfortable giving our time there. Maybe our previous resolutions have failed because they make us uncomfortable. They're too far outside of our box.

No one likes going somewhere or doing something that makes them uncomfortable. I like my classroom. I'm comfortable there! I know the rules, and what happens next, and who sits where. People speak when it's their turn

and they're all organized together to get the next assignment done. I sometimes wonder if I'm a teacher simply because I like law and order.

But there are other places that can offer the comforts of my classroom too. Your school board, your county commissioners, and your state representatives all have assigned seats. Most have nice name cards at their desks. People are called upon by name to talk to the group. Experts stand and present information to make the group more knowledgeable about the world around them. That sounds a lot like my classroom.

Your New Year's resolution should be to go to these meetings. There are people there that you already know too. There's that guy from your local who goes to every school board meeting to take notes, or that lady who hasn't missed a commission meeting in 30 years. If for no other reason, go keep them company!

But I can hear you now: "I don't like talking at those meetings. The only people who ever go to those things are there to complain." So don't talk. Sit quietly, smile, and watch. Could you imagine, a row full of teachers sitting and watching their government at work? My students are never more interested in what I have to say than when I'm not saying anything at all. Your presence alone could speak volumes.

Decisions about your classroom are made by these boards and commissions every day. How can they ever hope to make the right choices for your students without the calm, reassuring presence of a teacher? You are an eloquent orator. You are a skillful tactician. You are a model of restraint. You can't work in education without having already checked all of those boxes. This year, resolve to spend time at these meetings. Sure it's one more thing to do, but it's something that might help your students and your colleagues. You got into this job to help people. Help them by putting your unique skills to a unique new use.

All students stand to benefit from community schools model

Parents and educators continue to promote community schools as an effective school improvement strategy, and the state of Tennessee is starting to take notice.

In a study released this fall, the state's Office of Education Research and Accountability took a closer look at community schools in Tennessee and also reviewed national research on their effects. It points to several promising findings from national studies and makes several policy recommendations, but also highlights the need for additional research on Tennessee community schools.

TEA introduced legislation last year

that proposed the creation of a grant program to be overseen by the state and would provide state resources to support the establishment or expansion of community school work in Tennessee. The bill cleared the education committees in the House and Senate, but ultimately stalled in the finance committees for lack of funding.

Expanding investment in community schools can improve equity by helping kids in rural counties as well as students in urban areas. TEA is continuing to work with practitioners, providers, and other advocates in the hopes of building more support for policy supporting community schools.

ASK TEA

ANSWERS FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE TEA HOTLINE

Q: Is an evaluation score the same as an observation score?

A: No, an evaluation score and an observation score are not the same thing. An evaluation score is generally composed of three things: 35% student-growth data (TVAAS); 15% student achievement; and 50% classroom observations. Together, they provide an educator with her level of effectiveness ("LOE"), which is broken down into five effectiveness groups: "significantly above expectations" (which equates to a score of "5"); "above expectations" (a "4"); "at expectations" (a "3"); "below expectations" (a "2"); and "significantly below expectations" (a "1"). Other terms that are synonymous with evaluation score are level of effectiveness or LOE, annual-evaluation score, overall-effectiveness score, overall-evaluation score, and overall-performance-effectiveness level.

An observation score or overall-observation score, however, refers to an educator's classroom observations. These scores generally produce numbers like 2.75, 3.25, 4.00, and 4.50, and account for 50%, or more in some cases, of an educator's evaluation or effectiveness score.

An educator's observation score makes up only a part of the educator's evaluation score. It is the evaluation score that is used to make employment decisions, such as promotion, retention, termination, compensation, and the attainment of tenure status.

Q: I keep hearing about changes to the Teacher Code of Ethics. Why is this so important?

A: There are two very good reasons why the Teacher Code of Ethics is important. First of all, you are required to comply with the Teacher Code of Ethics as a public school teacher in Tennessee. Violation of the Code of Ethics in such a manner as to render one obnoxious as a member of the profession is a statutory example of conduct unbecoming a member of the teaching profession and is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal.

Secondly, as a result of changes that were made to the State Board of Education's licensure rules last year, any violation of the Code of Ethics is grounds for licensure action, including the denial, formal reprimand, suspension, or revocation of a Tennessee educator license.

If you are interested in more information about the changes to the Teacher Code of Ethics, please contact your UniServ Director.

Q: Can "stockpile days" be used for things other than closures due to winter weather?

A: Yes, however, approval from the commissioner of education is required in order for a district to use its so-called "stockpile days" for purposes other than meeting instructional time requirements missed due to dangerous or extreme weather conditions. With the commissioner's approval, stockpile days can be used to meet instructional time missed due to natural disasters, outbreaks of illness, and unsafe structural or environmental conditions. And, with approval, the time also may be used for certain types of meetings and trainings held over the course of a school year.

If you have specific concerns about how your district is using its stockpile days, contact your UniServ coordinator or local association president for assistance.



The TEA Advocacy Hotline supports local leaders and building representatives in answering member questions. If you have an employment-related question, please contact your building rep or UniServ coordinator.

TEA'S 2019 Legislative Priorities: What does it all meme?

Making sense of the opportunities and threats facing public education in the 111th General Assembly

TESTING



It defies logic that the state continues to place so much emphasis on TNReady. Test scores from a summative year-end standardized test are not valid stand-alone measures of student achievement, teacher effectiveness or school performance. It is time to end high-stakes decisions tied to TNReady scores.

INVESTMENT



All Tennessee children, regardless of where they live, deserve the support, resources and time to learn. Making sure students have outstanding educators means recruiting and supporting people who love kids and are committed to helping students unlock their potential. The state must work to increase funding for instructional resources and teacher pay statewide.

VOUCHERS



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS





Private school voucher schemes in other states have been disastrous. The data from other states, along with polling showing Tennesseans' strong opposition to vouchers, should send legislators running quickly in the other direction.

ARMING TEACHERS



Despite evidence that putting more guns in schools is not the answer, expect to see more senseless proposals to arm teachers as a means to keep our schools safe. TEA will continue to back common-sense measures like increased funding for school resource officers and appropriate safety training for educators.

www.TEATEACHERS.ORG



TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



Expanding support and resources for community schools should be a no-brainer for elected officials. A community school is created in partnership with administrators, parents, teachers, students and the community to meet the unique needs of children in one particular community. It has proven to increase proficiency, engagement, and college and career readiness.

ATTACKS ON TEA



TEA is the largest and strongest advocate for public education. This makes the association a prime target for attacks from those who want to profit off of our students, continue the state's test-and-punish system and further demoralize Tennessee educators.



/TennesseeEA



@TEA_teachers



/TEA_teachers

SAVE the DATE

TEA Civication

Tuesday of Spring Break

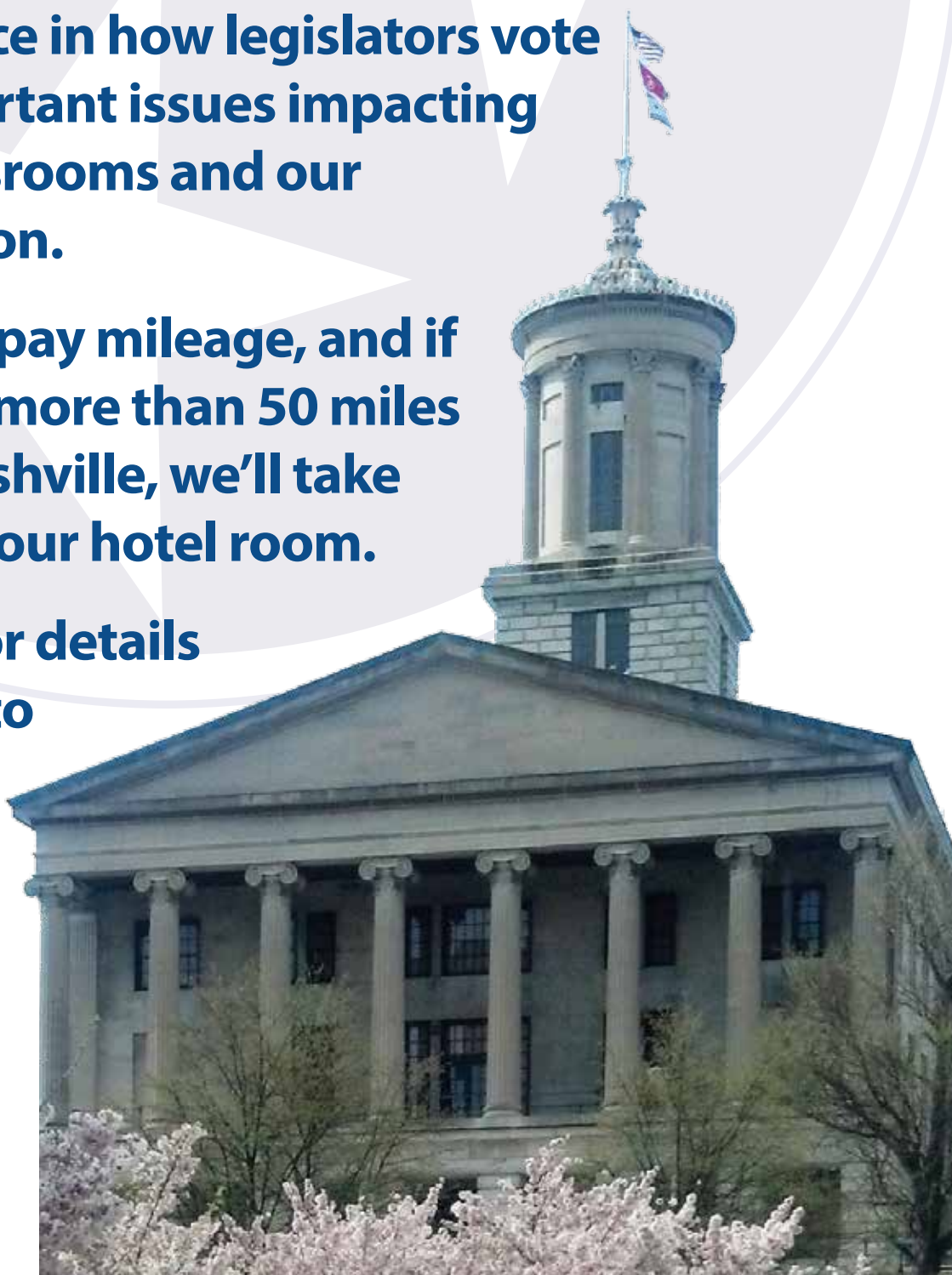
Stand up for public education!

Join educators from across the state in participating in TEA's Civication on the Tuesday of your Spring Break.

Hearing directly from educators in their districts can make the difference in how legislators vote on important issues impacting our classrooms and our profession.

TEA will pay mileage, and if you live more than 50 miles from Nashville, we'll take care of your hotel room.

Watch for details on how to register soon!



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www.teateachers.org
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20/20 Vision update from page 1

Growth in general fund revenue has been historic, yet much of the growth was not budgeted.

Because of conservative state budgeting processes, state general fund revenue was \$2.4 billion more than budgeted over four years (July 2014 – June 2018). Tennessee K-12 investment would have increased \$816 million had this revenue been appropriated, rather than going to the state rainy day fund or one-time capital projects. In the first four months of the current fiscal year (from July 1 to October 30) the state general fund has collected \$81 million more than budgeted, on track for a surplus of more than \$200 million.

General fund revenue is poised to increase further. In June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled states can collect sales taxes from online retailers even if the retailer does not have a physical presence in the state. Technically, Tennesseans already owe the tax, but now retailers that don't collect it will be required to do so after a bill is passed by the General Assembly, adding an estimated \$200 million in state sales tax revenue. Clearly revenue is available to get Tennessee to the Southeast average (\$800 million) in K-12 investment.

The second step is for educators and parents to push the incoming administration and lawmakers for the funding. One of the best ways to push is to know how well taxpayer education dollars are used.

Tennessee schools get more out of every taxpayer dollar than any state in the South and more than most states in the nation. Tennessee ranks 39th in investment per student yet is ninth in on-time graduation, highest in the region, and only three states have better graduation rates for African American students. Our state ranks sixth in average ACT scores of the 20 states that require all students to take the test. Of those 20 states, Tennessee ranks 14th in funding per student and is \$1,235 under the funding average. 64 percent of Tennessee's high school graduates are now entering college.

Imagine what we would do with more investment in our schools!

GET IT RIGHT WITH TESTING

The second TEA 20/20 Vision goal is to eliminate high-stakes decisions based on standardized test scores.

There are many high-stakes decisions for teachers, administrators, students,

FACT: TENNESSEE GETS MORE FOR EVERY K-12 DOLLAR

Where TN is for national rankings:

- Investment per student: **39th**
Source: NEA Rankings of the States
- On-time graduation: **9th**
Source: NCES
- Black on-time graduation: **4th**
Source: NCES
- Average ACT score: **6th**
of 20 states requiring all students to take ACT
- Funding by ACT states: **14th**
of states requiring ACT, TN is \$1,235 per student below average

FACT: TENNESSEE HAS THE ABILITY TO INVEST IN K-12

\$800 million additional K-12 funding needed to get to Southeast average

- General revenue not budgeted FY15-FY18* **\$2.4 billion**
*"FY" = fiscal year (July 1-June 30). Period between July '14 - June '18. Source: TN.gov
- K-12 potential FY15-18 non-budgeted revenue **\$816 million**
Tennessee K-12 receives approximately 34 percent of General Fund budget annually.
- Estimated revenue surplus for this year **\$200 million**
- Estimated new revenue from internet sales tax **\$200 million**

schools and school systems based on test scores. As a result, weeks of instruction are lost to test-prep and classroom practice is warped to meet everything TNReady. This test-and-punish system is also why TEA has had to fight each year for hold-harmless legislation when testing failures and irregularities have made testing penalties not only unfair, but possibly career-ending. It is time to put testing in its proper

place: as a means to improve instruction and assess students, rather than as a punishment or sanction. Assessments are an important part of education. However, standardized tests, especially secretive systems where parents and teachers cannot review or study the questions or answers, are not going to improve teaching practice. It is time to change state law on testing.

Upcoming actions:

JANUARY

Complete the "I'm in!" form online (www.TEAteachers.org/2020Vision)

Meetings with state elected officials and partner organizations

#RedforEd challenge days

Ongoing advocacy with local boards and educators

Facebook Live

FEBRUARY

Sign-up for Civication

Meetings with state elected officials and partner organizations

#RedforEd challenge days

Ongoing advocacy with local boards and educators

Facebook Live

MARCH

Attend Civication

TEA Minority Affairs Conference

Meetings with state elected officials and partner organizations

#RedforEd challenge days

Ongoing advocacy with local boards and educators

Facebook Live



From left: Belmont College of Theology Dean Darrell Gwaltney, TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder, TEA President Beth Brown and Pastors for Texas Children founder Rev. Charles Foster Johnson

Faith leaders from page 1

Tennessee to support public schools.” Pastors for Tennessee Children has pledged to provide assistance to local neighborhood and community schools, and to advocate for the students, teachers, support staff and principals by supporting the citizens’ constitutional right to a “system of free public schools” spelled out in Article XI, Section 12, of the Constitution of the State of Tennessee. “Home, church and school — these are the three pillars we have vowed to protect,” Johnson said. “All three must be strong, and so it is time for Pastors for Tennessee Children to come together in solidarity for every public school in Tennessee, and work in such a way that public education ceases to be a wedge issue in Tennessee politics.”

Johnson traveled across Tennessee last fall, speaking with fellow ministers about the importance of supporting public schools against vouchers.

“We oppose school vouchers, which take from public school funds and put them out of the control of the public, mostly into unregulated religious schools,” according to the mission statement of the Pastors for Tennessee Children.

As part of his Tennessee speaking tour, Johnson described the successful fight he and fellow clergy led against vouchers in Texas. He said he founded Pastors for Texas Children in 2013 because he saw the destruction of communities perpetrated by the voucher schemes in other states and vowed to stop them in Texas. Pastors for Texas Children has succeeded, in part by growing its ranks to more than 2,000 faith leaders, and has inspired formation of similar groups in Oklahoma, Kentucky and Tennessee.

“Teachers are the professionals who preserve and protect God’s common good for all children,” Johnson said. “That is why we implore you to help us help you. Make an appointment with your pastor and invite them to join us.

“And if your pastor does not support public schools, he or she needs a ‘Come to Jesus’ meeting, sponsored by you!” Johnson said.

To learn more about Pastors for Tennessee Children, visit www.pastorsfortennesseechildren.org.

CTE, TNReady changes possible with new state leadership

New leadership from page 1

Brown notes that project-based learning, the way many Tennessee teachers taught prior to the drive on test scores, fits into the goal of real-world skills that vocational classes provide.

“He has said how much he respects teachers and understands our profession. It’s our hope that he will rely on us to help meet his idea of what Tennessee education should be. We see a lot of common ground from his statements and hope to work with him in a constructive manner,” Brown said.

Lee has been a supporter of private school vouchers. He has reiterated his stance on the issue in recent interviews, but has not committed his administration to having its own privatization bills.

“We have an open mind on the governor-elect’s education priorities. We know private school vouchers are damaging public schools in other states. Fortunately, TEA has been able to prevent them in Tennessee for several years. Regardless of the incoming administration, there will be privatization fights like we have experienced in years past,” Brown said.

The General Assembly is also undergoing a tremendous change in officeholders and leadership.

In November, the super-majority Republican House caucus overwhelmingly nominated Rep. Glen Casada (R-Franklin) to be the next speaker.

Casada was instrumental in passing a final hold-harmless bill on the last day of the 2018 legislative session. As majority leader, he made the motion to recall the state budget from the clerk’s desk and hold it in the House until the administration and Senate passed the House bill to protect students and teachers from state testing failures.

“Glen Casada showed he was willing to advocate for teachers and parents across the state, and took decisive action to make sure they are treated fairly and respectfully during state testing failures,” said TEA Chief Lobbyist Jim Wrye. “Leader Casada can be a great advocate for education, and we look forward to working with him and the entire House leadership team to move Tennessee public education forward.”

In the Senate, Republicans re-nominated Sen. Randy McNally (R-Oak Ridge) as the speaker of the body, and as extension the state Lieutenant Governor. McNally began his tenure as head of the Senate in 2017. His leadership has been key to having the upper chamber pass more pro-public education legislation and halt anti-teacher measures.

Senate Republicans elected Sen. Jack Johnson (R-Brentwood) as Majority Leader and Sen. Ken Yager (R-Kingston) as Republican Caucus Chair to round out the new leadership team. Johnson and Yager have good relationships with TEA and its membership. Both leaders also have solid voting records on key education issues.

“Johnson and Yager have had open doors to the concerns of TEA members, and we believe the practice will continue in their new leadership roles,” Wrye said.

House Republicans elected Rep. William Lamberth (R-Portland) as Majority Leader, Rep. Cameron Sexton (R-Crossville) as Republican Caucus Leader, and Rep. Rick Tillis (R-Lewisburg) as Caucus Whip.

House Democrats elected their first African American top officer, Rep. Karen Camper (D-Memphis) as Minority Leader and



House majority leader and speaker-elect Rep. Glen Casada



Senate Speaker and Lieutenant Governor Sen. Randy McNally



House Minority Leader Rep. Karen Camper

retained Rep. Mike Stewart (D-Nashville) as Democratic Caucus Leader.

Senate Democrats elected Sen. Jeff Yarbro (D-Nashville) as Minority Leader and Sen. Raumesh Akbari (D-Memphis) as Democratic Caucus Chair.