



Florida School Boards Association

The voice of education in Florida.

FSBA Federal Relations Subcommittee Report 2019-2020 Mid-Year Report

Chair: Beverly Slough
Vice Chair: Kevin Adams

Members: Tina Certain
Rene Flowers
Gwynetta Giddens
Debbie Jordan
Lisa Miller

Dates of meetings and activities:

August 9, 2019 – Platform Priority Workgroup Meeting (via GoToMeeting)
August 30, 2019 – Question & Answer Session on Proposed FSBA Platforms (via GoToMeeting)
September 10, 2019 – Federal Issues & Advocacy Conference Planning (via GoToMeeting)
September 12, 2019 – FSBA 2020 Legislative and Federal Platform Adoption Meeting
September 20, 2019 – FSBA Legislative Committee Conference Call (via GoToMeeting)
September 24-25, 2019 – Federal Issues & Advocacy Conference
October 18, 2019 – FSBA Legislative Committee Conference Call (via GoToMeeting)
October 25, 2019 – FSBA Legislative Committee Conference Call (via GoToMeeting)
November 9, 2019 – FSBA Legislative Committee Conference Call (via GoToMeeting)
November 15, 2019 – FSBA Legislative Committee Conference Call (via GoToMeeting)

Main actions taken/accomplishments to date:

In August - September, the Subcommittee was actively engaged in the development, consideration, and adoption of the FSBA 2020 Federal Platform. *(The FSBA 2020 Federal Platform is attached to this report and may also be accessed [HERE](#).)*

FSBA's 2019 Federal Issues & Advocacy Conference (FIA Conference) was held September 24-25, 2019. Seven school board members and two state or local staff members participated in the Conference. The group was also assisted by TC Wolfe of New Century Government Affairs. The conference began with a briefing session with NSBA staff – Chip Slaven and Deborah Rigsby – on several FSBA Federal Platform issues with an emphasis on overall federal education funding, full funding for IDEA, teacher training and recruitment/ retention, and school safety. This briefing session allowed the participants to refine talking points on the issue and devise a strategy for making the most of each of the scheduled meetings that followed. *(The complete schedule of meetings is attached with this report.)*

The NSBA briefing was followed by a meeting with U.S. Department of Education Deputy Secretary Frank Brogan and senior staff. Secretary Betsy DeVos also sat in for a portion of this meeting. During the remainder of the FIA Conference, attendees met with Florida's U.S. Senate and House members and/or their senior staff and with members and/or senior staff of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and House Education and Labor Committee. In addition to items addressed in the FSBA Federal Platform, participants also discussed issues relating to hurricane recovery, school meal programs, the U.S. Census.

Both before and after the FIA Conference, the Subcommittee has continued to monitor and pursue the education related Congressional budget and policy Committees and provided updates and information to FSBA members on these issues via the FSBA Session Spotlight and/or the regular Legislative Committee Conference calls. Among the issues that the Subcommittee has monitored and/or pursued include:

- Federal E-Rate Program – E-Rate is a vital program that aids schools and libraries to connect to high-speed broadband so that students have access to the Internet and the digital tools and adaptive technology essential for successful learning in today’s modern world. Earlier this year, the Federal Communications Commission proposed a rule change that would place a cap on the Universal Service Fund (which provides the funding for E-Rate and other related services) and a sub-cap on the Schools and Libraries E-Rate Program. FSBA joined other school board members around the country in signing a letter in opposition to this proposed rule change. (*The E-Rate letter is attached with this report.*)
- Federal Budget – Although the House passed a 2020 spending bill earlier this year, the Senate has failed to do so and the country has been operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) – stopgap spending bill to continue government operations at fiscal year 2019 until a spending deal can be reached – was set to expire on November 21, 2019. Even amid the distractions of the impeachment hearings, the chambers were able to approve another CR that will continue to provide temporary funding at fiscal year 2019 levels through December 20, 2019.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that would have a direct impact on school feeding programs because, under current eligibility criteria, any school aged children in families that qualify for SNAP are categorically-eligible or directly certified for free school meals. The proposed changes would require about half of the families that currently automatically qualify for these benefits to submit an application. If an application is submitted, less than half would remain eligible for free meals, a little more than half would become eligible for reduced price (rather than free) meals, and a significant number would no longer qualify for benefits at all.
- U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence – Earlier this month, the United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) issued a report analyzing targeted school violence. The NTAC conducted a study of 41 incidents of targeted school violence from 2008 to 2017 and reported their key findings and recommendations:
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) – The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on three cases relating to the Trump Administration’s 2017 decision to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy which grants deferral from deportation and work permits to about 800,000 undocumented immigrants who arrived in the country as children. Previously, three appeals courts had ruled against the decision to rescind the program. The main question for the Supreme Court is whether the decision to end the program was based on legally sound reasons.
- E-Cigarettes/Vaping – The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing to examine lung illnesses and other issues relating to the rising use of electronic cigarettes by youth. More than 1.6 million individuals are using e-cigarettes including 1 in 4 high school students and 1 in 10 middle school students.

(Additional information on the last four issues listed above is available in the [November 15 edition of the FSBA Session Spotlight.](#))

The Subcommittee is currently gathering information for a letter to be shared with congressional and legislative leaders, federal and state emergency management executives, and others. The intent of this letter is to offer information and recommendations to streamline and improve the process by which school districts report, and are reimbursed for, expenses relating to hurricane preparedness, response, and recovery.

The Subcommittee is looking forward to the NSBA Equity Symposium and Advocacy Institute scheduled for February 1-4, 2020 in Washington, D.C. Information and registration for the Equity Institute is available [HERE](#). Information and registration for the Advocacy Institute is available [HERE](#).

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Slough, Chair, Federal Relations Subcommittee
Kevin Adams, Vice Chair, Federal Relations Subcommittee