legislative preview

legislative preview
webcast
october 3, 2013

scsba.org

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Support materials

• Common Core State Standards handout

• Reproducible SCJET handout

general webcast information

SCSBA looks forward to your participation in our Legislative Preview live webcast from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 3, 2013.

View/participate online free of charge

The link to view/participate in the webcast is http://scsba.org/legislative-preview-webcast-2/.

Individuals can view it from their home or office computers. Some school boards may view it as a group at a school or district office location. Keep in mind that advanced public notice must be given if a quorum is present.

A high speed internet connection is highly recommended to adequately view the live streaming video and sound capability is a must.

Questions and comments can be made during the webcast by typing them into the chat box at the bottom of the screen and will be seen by all viewing the program.

View online afterwards

A link of the recorded program will be emailed to school board secretaries/clerks about two weeks after the webcast to forward to anyone who could not participate.

boardmanship institute

Board members who view the webcast will receive 5 points and 1.5 hours credit in the Boardmanship Institute. Board secretaries are asked to email the names of participating board members to Sandy Poole at spoole@scsba.org by Monday, October 31, 2013 to receive credit.

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    Dr. Paul Krohne, *Executive Director, SCSBA*
    John Hughes, *SCSBA President, Marion Area 2 Board Member*

2. **Communicating Common Core State Standards**
    Debbie Elmore, *Communications Director, SCSBA*

3. **SCJET: restructuring education funding**
    Scott Price, *General Counsel, SCSBA*

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    Scott Price, *General Counsel, SCSBA*

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    Scott Price and Duane Cooper *Legislative and Advocacy Coordinator, SCSBA*

6. **Education votes 2012**
    Duane Cooper, *Legislative and Advocacy Coordinator, SCSBA*

7. **Closing comments**
    John Hughes

legislative issues, position statements, talking points

Communicating Common Core State Standards

Overview

In June 2009, the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) began developing K-12 standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics "that define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education to graduate career and/or college ready.

The standards are to be a clear, consistent, rigorous, set of shared goals and expectations for teachers and for parents. The effort to develop Common Core State Standards (CCSS) was in response to a national study which found state high school graduation requirements did not match the demands of global competiveness and colleges' academic requirements. When the final standards were released in June of 2010, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and the State Board of Education fomed a 41-member review group that compared SC's standards to the CCSS.

The review groups found "consistent evidence that the CCSS are written at a cognitive level which meets or exceeds the current rigor of the SC academic standards." After its findings, the EOC voted to adopt CCSS June 10, 2010. This was followed by the State Board of Education's adoption of CCSS on July 14, 2010.

Since then, school districts have been working to fully implement CCSS by the 2014-2015 school year. State legislation to eliminate CCSS has been filed in recent years and calls to stop the implementation of CCSS are becoming louder and often include misinformation and political rhetoric. School boards, superintendents and school communications professionals are now caught squarely in the middle of an intense political/ideological battle that is threatening to derail years of planning, professional development and implementation. The time is now to cut through the rhetoric and communicate the facts.

What is CCSS?

CCSS is a clear set of shared goals and expectations for the knowledge and skills students need in "core" subject areas (ELA and mathematics) at each grade level that ultimately prepares them to graduate career and/or college ready. In South Carolina, common standards are nothing new. Schools have been teaching common standards – developed by and unique to our state - in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science and social studies since the passage of the Education Accountability Act of 1998.

As part of the CCSS Initiative, SC no longer has to maintain its common standards for ELA and mathematics, however it will continue to maintain its common standards in science and social studies. The standards establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

What about testing?

States that voluntarily adopted CCSS are currently collaborating to develop common assessments that will be aligned to the standards and replace existing end of year state assessments. There are two consortiums working to develop the tests – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). These state-led consortia on assessment are grounded in the following principles:
   • allow for comparison across students,

schools, districts, states and nations
- create economies of scale
- provide information and support more effective teaching and learning

States can voluntarily choose to participate in one of these consortiums, partner with another testing company, or develop tests of their own.

On February 8, 2012, the SC State Board of Education voted to adopt tests being developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The State Department of Education released the following implementation schedule:
- 2011-12 transition year
- 2012-13 transition year
- 2013-14 bridge year (CCSS will be used for instructional purposes)
- 2014-15 full implementation (testing will begin)

Position statement

SCSBA board member delegates will vote on a proposed resolution on December 7, 2013 during the association's annual business meeting that reads as follows: "SCSBA supports South Carolina's adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards."

Talking points

(see Reality Check: CCSS Rhetoric vs Facts in support materials)

SC Jobs, Education Tax Act (SCJET)

Overview

Over the past three years, SCSBA has been working with several education organizations and guided by noted economist and former chairman of the South Carolina Board of Economic Advisors (BEA) Dr. Harry Miley to develop a comprehensive education funding reform plan - the South Carolina Jobs, Educa-

tion and Tax Act (SCJET). SCJET is the education community's funding plan to address both the changes in state laws governing tax and funding issues that have resulted in negative consequences for schools and the increased burden by local businesses for funding school operations due to the Property Tax Relief Act of 2006 (Act 388).

The plan restructures how the state generates revenue and how it allocates funding to districts within all of the existing state laws regarding taxable properties for school operations. It focuses on simplifying the funding system by:
- removing contradictions and inconsistencies in state and local laws
- reducing the wide differences in school operating millage rates
- limiting the erosion of local funds through business incentives such as fee-in-lieu of taxes (FILOT) and multi-county parks
- providing sufficient and stable state revenues
- protecting local board authority to generate local funding above the state program and providing more consistency in local funding authority and procedures

How it works

(See also SCJET handout in support materials. Information based on 2012 data)

- The state levies a uniform millage (SUM) rate of 100 mills on all taxable property, excluding homestead or owner-occupied property, in every school district statewide. Millage rates currently vary across the state, ranging from 302 mills in Hampton Two to 92 mills in Beaufort County. Lowering the millage rate to 100 mills statewide is estimated to generate about $1.3 billion for schools and provide the following:

- more than $600 million in tax relief to businesses, industries and other non-owner occupied properties and automobiles, boats, etc.

- a level "playing field" for school districts to

recruit and encourage business and economic growth

- a stable and sound revenue source for schools to better manage budgetary dips in the economy

- limits on local government's ability to negotiate away school property taxes through business incentives such as fee-in-lieu of taxes (FILOT) and multi-county parks

- Existing state revenues, including the Education Finance Act (EFA), Homestead Exemption Fund (HEF), some of the Education Improvement Act (EIA) funds and other state funds are combined and allocated to districts per student. This would simplify funding by reducing about 70 separate state funding sources to 12 and providing districts more flexibility in using the funds to meet the needs of the students they serve.

- State allocates additional funding to make up the difference between the amount of property taxes generated for schools statewide and what the SUM would generate (100 mills). This is estimated to be about $612 million.

- Once all of the state funds are combined and totaled, the funding is distributed to districts on a per student basis, known as the Base Student Funding (BSF). The amount each district receives is determined by totaling all of the state funds and dividing it on a Weighted Pupil Units (WPUs) formula. WPUs are weightings assigned to students for various factors including grade level, poverty, gifted and talented, special needs and more. SCJET uses WPUs recommended by the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee. This is estimated to be $5,295 per student.

- To ensure districts currently spending more than the estimated $5,295 BSF do not receive less funding than they currently receive, transition funding or hold harmless funding will be necessary from the state.

This is estimated to be about $335 million.

- All other EIA and other state funding for programs not included in the rollup funds are retained as separate, categorical funds. These funds are not allocated based on a per pupil basis and include:
  - transportation related
  - national board certification
  - palmetto priority schools
  - retiree insurance
  - 4K

- Local funding would be restructured as follows:
  - Local school boards would have the authority to levy local millage of up to 8% of the assessed value of taxable property, excluding owner-occupied property (4%) as required by Act 388, to fund district operations above what the state allocates. This is similar to the authority boards now have to fund capital expenses (8% constitutional debt limit).
  - Local school boards wanting to go above the 8% limit would be required to call for a referendum seeking voter approval.

If approved, the property tax millage would apply to ALL property including homestead or 4% property, which is the same as local referenda under the constitutional debt section.

The plan incorporates a framework for establishing a statewide infrastructure bank to pay for school facility needs.

Position statement

SCSBA supports the passage of the SC Jobs, Education and Tax Act (SCJET) as a package plan only.

Talking points

- The time is now to restructure the way our

state funds education. Funding inequities built into the system as a result of changes in state tax funding laws will only increase over time. The state's primary funding source for public schools known as the base student cost or BSC is being funded at a level reflecting the late 1990s.

- SCJET is a sustainable, stable funding plan that:
  - increases funding for 60% of the state's students and maintains existing funding for the remainder of students
  - provides much needed tax relief for local businesses, which could encourage economic growth
  - provides a fiscal base to repair state teachers' salary schedule
  - gives local school boards funding flexibility for generating local funds

- It radically simplifies the state's funding system by:
  - abolishing the index of taxpaying ability that is no longer relevant due to changes in property tax values
  - abolishing the required EIA local minimum effort
  - unifying school operating millage rates
  - eliminating conflicts between property tax limits and funding requirements
  - eliminating the gap between homestead operating taxes and reimbursement
  - abolishing complicated funding tiers and growth formulas
  - reducing the use of "parallel" tax system for FILOTs/multi-county parks

- Changes in state property tax laws, primarily through passage of the Property Tax Relief Act of 2006 (Act 388), have resulted in negative funding consequences not only for school districts but also for businesses that now have most of the burden for funding lo-

cal school operations.

- While SCJET would require additional state funds to start the system, it provides millions of dollars in tax relief to local businesses, industries and other non-owner occupied properties that could encourage economic growth in local communities.

- Funding to implement SCJET could come from rolling up sales tax exemptions through comprehensive tax reform, which could occur at once or through a phased-in process.

Tuition tax credits and vouchers

Proviso 1.85 and Senate bill 279

Overview

After more than eight years of battling tuition tax credit/voucher proposals, an $8 million private school tuition tax credit program for "exceptional needs students" surfaced and was adopted during the waning days of finalizing the state budget. Through a one-year (2013-2014 fiscal year) budget proviso, taxpayers can claim tax credits (dollar-for-dollar) on their 2014 tax returns for donations made starting January 1 to nonprofit organizations that provide "grants" to pay for private school tuition of students with disabilities. The amount of grants per student is up to $10,000 or actual tuition cost, whichever is less. The "accountability" measures for the private schools, including religious schools are that they must:

- offer a general education to primary or secondary school students

- not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin

- be located in the state

- offer courses set forth in the state's diploma requirements

- administer national achievement or state standardized tests, or both, at progressive grade levels to determine student progress

- have facilities that are subject to applicable federal, state, and local laws

- be a member in good standing of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the South Carolina Association of Christian Schools or the South Carolina Independent Schools Association

Senate bill 279, to permanently establish a statewide tuition tax credit program, currently resides in the Senate Finance Committee. It is very similar to one that passed the House in 2012 and eventually died on the Senate calendar. Committee Chairman Sen. Hugh Leatherman has appointed four senators - Wes Hayes (chairman), Danny Verdin, John Matthews and Joel Lourie - to serve on a special subcommittee to "thoroughly examine all aspects" of the bill's implications for all students and families in South Carolina and report its results to the full committee. The subcommittee is charged with conducting public hearings across the state to gather input and to seek independent experts on this subject to offer recommendations based on facts and not on theories.

The following provisions are in the bill:

- Tax deductions of $4,000 would be allowed for students attending private school; $2,000 for a student attending home school; and $1,000 for a student attending a public school outside their resident district. An annual increase is provided to equal the percentage in inflation plus the percentage increase in state population.

- Tax credits are allowed for donations by individuals, partnerships or corporations to a scholarship funding organization (SFO). Credits may not exceed 60 percent of the taxpayer's tax liability. Donors cannot specify a child or a school as the beneficiary. Further, at least 95 percent of annual contributions go to grants, with no more than five percent for administrative costs.

- The maximum total of tax credits for free/reduced lunch and Medicaid students is capped at $15 million annually; the maximum total of tax credits for exceptional needs students is at $10 million.

- SFO grants (vouchers) for free/reduced or Medicaid students may not exceed $5,000 or the cost of tuition, whichever is less. Amounts for "exceptional needs" students may not exceed $10,000 or the cost of tuition, whichever is less.

- "Accountability" provisions for the private schools include:

  - the requirement that all students be administered national achievement or state standardized tests at progressive grade levels

  - student test scores, by category and for all grades tested, must be submitted annually to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and published on its website

  - no state agency may regulate the educational program

  - they must be a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the S.C. Association of Christian Schools, or the S.C. Independent Schools Association

The SC Education Oversight Committee is charged with establishing regulations concerning school requirements, determines if a school meets the criteria and reports to an advisory committee.

Position statement

SCSBA opposes any state or federally-mandated efforts to directly or indirectly subsidize elementary or secondary private, religious or home schools with public funds. It is a long-held position approved by the school boards governing the 81 public school districts in our state.

Talking points

Tuition tax credit/voucher programs are unaf-

fordable, unaccountable and unproven.

Unaffordable

- The state has not funded public schools at the level required by its own law for years, yet lawmakers continue to consider tuition tax credit/voucher programs that have been estimated in the past to range from $37 million to more than $200 million. This year's program is capped at $8 million for one year.

- Tuition tax credit programs are inconsistent with recent calls for comprehensive tax reform, including the elimination of special sales and service tax exemptions, by creating four more special exemptions that would divert public tax dollars to private and home schools. Nothing now in law prevents individuals or organizations from forming an SFO as a charitable organization to accept donations for scholarships for low-income students to attend private schools, homeschools, or out-of-district tuition.

- The proposal is inconsistent with fiscal conservative principles including the creation of a government entitlement program for private and home schoolers and grows government by adding new duties for the Department of Revenue and the Education Oversight Committee.

- There is no truth whatsoever in proponents' cost savings claims for public schools. In the "real world" of school funding, potential cost savings can only be realized with the elimination of entire classes, teachers, and schools. When applying the estimated student migration rates down to the school district, school, and even grade levels, numbers would equate to less than 1 student per class per grade level. This would not trigger elimination of any teachers and other fixed costs such as electricity and supplies but would instead create large reductions in state funding to schools.

- Research of existing tuition tax credit/voucher programs in other states show grants often become a subsidy for private schools and re-

imburse parents of children already enrolled in private and religious schools.

Unproven

- Tuition tax credit/voucher programs have not been proven effective in improving the academic performance of students who use them to switch to private school. Research indicates that when student demographics are taken into account, public school students perform as well, if not better, than private school students.

- In March of 2009, the first research since the mid-1990s compared the academic progress of students in Milwaukee's private school voucher program with students in Milwaukee Public Schools and showed no major differences in success between the two groups. The study was conducted by researchers mostly from the University of Arkansas.

- In June 2008, a U.S. Education Department study of the Washington D.C. school voucher program showed students using private school tuition vouchers, generally did no better on reading and math tests after two years than their public school peers and mirrors findings of previous studies of the program.

- A 2006 study of Cleveland's voucher program by the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education found there were no observed academic gains for African-American voucher students and no benefits for voucher users in the second and fourth grades after statistical adjustments are made for students' prior ability and time spent at a private school.

- A 2006 U.S. Department of Education study shows that, when socioeconomic factors are taken into account, students in public schools perform as well or better in most categories than do students in private schools.

Unaccountable

- Public dollars will be used to fund private school education for a select few students at

the expense of many.

- Private schools do not have to adhere to academic accountability requirements, financial transparency measures, and school safety measures that public schools are required to follow. These include but are not limited to, grade level state specific course standards, annual state specific testing in four subject areas and high school end-of-course tests, annual publication of school and district report cards that grade the academic achievement of its students, hiring highly qualified teachers, public disclosure of employee salaries, financial transactions and more.

- Proponents claim to be empowering parents by providing choices, but parents don't get to choose which private school their child attends, it is the private schools who choose which students they will accept. Public schools choose all students. Private schools choose which students.

- Many school districts already provide an array of proven and accountable choices for parents and students.

legislative issues roundup

SC Transformation School District (under discussion)

A plan proposed by State Superintendent of Education Mick Zais to "modernize the state's Education Accountability Act," is currently being shopped to members of the General Assembly and includes, among other things, a new intervention piece for underperforming schools. In general, the proposal calls for changes to the EAA that would mirror the accountability requirements the SC Department of Education is using for the federal accountability system to include common "college-

and career –ready standards in English language arts and mathematics, annual student testing, grading schools, and public recognition of high performing and low performing schools. Among the changes would be an expansion of options the state superintendent would have to address "persistently failing schools" to include transferring schools to a statewide "turnaround" or "recovery" school district known as the SC Transformation School District (SCTSD). The school district would be for the lowest performing 5 percent of schools and the bottom 10 percent of schools with the widest achievement gaps and consist of the following requirements:

- be separate from SC Department of Education (SDE) and the State Board of Education (SBE)

- have a five-year transformation plan for schools

- operate schools with flexibility like charter schools (e.g., at-will employment)

- schools would report to SCTSD superintendent, not local resident district superintendent and board

- funded with local, state and federal funds (money follows the child)

During the fourth year, the SCTSD superintendent would review and determine school progress and recommend to the SDE and SBE one of the following options for each school:

- return school to local district

- convert school to charter school

- continue in the SCTSD

- close the school

Details regarding the SDE's EAA modernization plan are sparse at this time. SCSBA's position, in general, includes the following:

- SCSBA has long supported accountability measures for public schools and, as such, is a proponent of the Education Accountability Act of 1998. Of particular note in the EAA

when it was first enacted was the availability of state-driven technical assistance and other resources for schools and districts that did not perform well under the act. Technical assistance resources, however, under the EAA have dwindled in recent years. Any significant changes to the EAA must be accompanied by the required resources to ensure the highest opportunity for success.

• SCSBA believes that state-funded training programs for school boards in districts rated at-risk should be mandatory as part of the effort under the Education Accountability Act to focus on actions that support increasing student achievement.

• Reporting requirements that focus on the education achievement gap should be tied in with meaningful, research-based national, state and local initiatives with measurable outcomes that close the educational achievement gap for all students.

• SCSBA believes in local decision making in the governance of school districts.

• SCSBA believes that there should exist in regulations a clear process to return control to the local school board if a school or district takeover occurs under state or federal law. SCSBA believes that, upon request of the local school board, the State Department of Education should be authorized to provide technical assistance to districts experiencing financial difficulty.

Parent Trigger Law

(Senate bill 556)

A bill allowing parents of students enrolled in a school designated at-risk or a school in a district designated at-risk under the Education Accountability Act to force a conversion to a charter school or to transform the school under one of three statutory models was filed in the Senate. The bill currently resides in the Senate Education Committee. The basic concept is that parents representing at least 51 percent of the students attending a school, or a combination that includes feeder schools, may sign a petition and ultimately force a school to

• convert to a charter school (something already allowed under the current Charter School Act);

• replace some of the school's administration and faculty and adopt a new governance structure which could include creation of a "turnaround office" within the district along with a "turnaround leader" who reports directly to the superintendent; or

• close it altogether and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization.

Dubbed the Parent Empowerment Act, the bill has been debated nationally since 2010 as the "parent trigger" proposal. The source of Parent Trigger laws is the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) which is a national network based in Washington, D.C. and has a strong impact on legislation in South Carolina and other conservative-leaning states. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, as of March 2013, at least 25 states have considered parent trigger laws and seven of them have enacted some version of the law. The seven states are: California, Connecticut, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Ohio and Texas.

SCSBA opposes any law that usurps the local community's governance of its schools through their elected/appointed school board. The bill is a distraction from the real work our schools require – implementing proven, common-sense strategies for parent involvement and meaningful school reform. The narrow and disruptive range of options offered have shown no overall success in improving schools nationwide. The potential outcome, disrupting and dismantling schools, is likely to harm vulnerable students and communities in which the local public school is often a key stabilizing force.

4K Expansion

(Senate bill 134)

A bill that would expand 4K to at-risk students statewide through a phase-in process currently resides in the Senate. Senator Larry Groom has placed a minority report on the bill, essentially keeping it from moving through the process. During the state budget deliberations, the General Assembly expanded South Carolina's pilot 4-K program (CDEPP) with an infusion of $24 million through a budget proviso. It allows for the addition of 17 school districts with high percentages of "at-risk" students. Lawmakers, however, took the additional step of splitting the funds between public and private providers. Public providers will receive 65 percent, with private providers receiving 35 percent.

The 4K expansion bill would provide preschool to all at-risk children through the following phase-in process:

- first 8 districts that participated in the Abbeville school funding case
- remaining plaintiff districts in the lawsuit
- to at-risk children statewide

The proposal is estimated to cost the state up to $87 million.

In South Carolina, approximately 50 percent of those in the age range do not attend a 4-K program. EOC has determined approximately 41,592 children would meet criteria for full-day, four-year-old kindergarten for at-risk children.

The 4K expansion bill, along with the Read to Succeed Act (see next), have become a priority for the political leadership in the House and Senate. While SCSBA is generally supportive of both measures as education reform, we believe the General Assembly must address more pressing education issues including fully funding our current system and comprehensive education funding reform.

Read to Succeed Act

(Senate bill 516 & House bill 3994)

A bill aimed at boosting students' chances for success by ensuring they can read by the fourth grade through a coordinated focus on reading in the primary grades currently resides on the Senate Calendar with the House companion bill residing in the House Education K-12 Subcommittee. The comprehensive proposal, modeled after a similar program in Florida, would require schools to retain third-graders whose scores on the state reading tests and other indicators fall in the bottom of the lowest tier. Highlights of the proposal include:

- The State Department of Education would be required to establish an office of reading and a reading proficiency panel to carry out the reading program including professional development, review district reading plans and work with colleges and universities in developing research-based reading proficiency programs.
- Students would be screened for school readiness as they enter kindergarten to identify problems, from language skills to vision impairment. Intervention would include after-school programs and summer reading camps, as well as reading coaches. Schools would have to keep parents informed of their children's reading progress, steps the classroom teacher and other reading professionals have taken and will take to help their child comprehend grade-appropriate texts. They will do this by providing access to books, assuring time for the student to read independently, reading to students, and talking with students about books.
- Training would be provided to teachers on research-based reading instruction and delivery.
- Districts would have to develop and publish annually a comprehensive research-based reading plan that includes intervention op-

tions available to students and funding for these services.

- Elementary school teachers would be required to earn a literacy credential within seven years, requiring five graduate-level courses on how to teach reading.

SCSBA is generally supportive of the bill as long as adequate and stable state funding, resources and assistance is provided to carry out the program requirements. Some issues to consider are:

- The program would require additional programs, reporting requirements, and personnel that must be fully supported with state-level funding and other resources.

- There must be sustained funding for the intervention pieces: summer camps and reading interventionists.

- Districts/schools showing success through specific reading programs already in place should be able to obtain State Board-approved waivers from certain aspects of the Read to Succeed proposal.

- Districts should be able to retain students, if necessary, up to the third grade level and not just at the third grade level. SCSBA does not support an added retention "gateway" at the seventh grade level as proposed by the State Department of Education.

- The add-on Literacy Teacher endorsement requirements for all teachers could place an undue financial burden on teachers and should be a requirement for only those who provide reading interventions.

- The Reading Proficiency Panel should include representation from educators in the field.

Education votes 2014

Overview

It may be more than a year away, but the steps leading to the 2014 General Elections are only a few months away as filing for state offices opens in March. School board members and public education advocates should get involved by taking steps now to prepare. In addition to electing a governor and state superintendent of education, South Carolina voters will elect members of the General Assembly in both the SC Senate and House and U.S. Senate and House. The outcome of these state house races could dramatically impact public education policy in our state.

An organized and committed effort can make a difference in the outcome of major races. It is important to remember campaigns are marathons not sprints. Be zealous in your civic responsibility – get involved in the election process on behalf of public education. But, be smart. State law prohibits the use of school district personnel, equipment, materials, office buildings or other resources to advocate for or against any candidate. Also, remember to check district policies that often prohibit campaigning for candidates – or campaign materials – on school or district property

Actions for school board members

1. Identify pro-public education candidates and encourage them to run for office. Some general questions to consider asking are:

   - Does the candidate have a strong commitment to the need for public education in a democratic society?

   - Does the candidate have an understanding about the basic concepts of public education?

   - Does the candidate seek and value the knowledge and opinions of school board members, educators and education supporters?

- Does the candidate believe and support equitable and adequate funding as essential to quality education?

2. Support pro-public education candidates by contributing monetarily or by volunteering on campaigns. Running for office can be expensive and time consuming. All successful campaigns have canvassing (door-to-door) efforts, phone bank efforts, letters to the editor and other activities that require the commitment and work of volunteers. If time does not permit you to volunteer, encourage your friends and family to do so. As public officials, consider activating your local political machines to support pro-public education candidates.

3. Educate the community about your schools and the impact they have on your students and families in your communities. Arming public school advocates with facts about public education may be the most important role boards can play during the election year. Anti-public education activists understand the importance of the 2014 elections and their efforts will center on misleading statements and positions about public school performance and funding. Public education supporters and advocates must be ready to counter these messages but also be prepared to proactively inform the public of public education priorities and challenges. Some of the effective methods to educate the community are:

- hosting candidate forums
- writing letters to editor or opinion columns
- creating an online blog
- talking within social circles about education priorities

4. Conduct voter registration drives in schools.

Key 2014 election dates

March
Filing opens for party primary and convention candidates.

May
Deadline to register to vote in June primary.

June
Primaries held. Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

June
Primary runoff (if required).

October
Deadline to register to vote for the general election.

November 4, 2014
General Election

Online resources

SC Election Commission (**www.scvotes.org**)

SC Republican Party **(www.scgop.com**)

SC Democratic Party (**www.scdp.org**)

SC Ethics Commission (**www.ethics.sc.gov**)