

Indiana School Board Members in Washington D.C.

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Members of Indiana's Federal Relations Network Committee, as well as school board members from Carmel Clay Schools and Fort Wayne Community School Corporation, attended the NSBA Advocacy Institute in Washington, DC, earlier this month. For two and a half days, school board members from across the country were given information on current federal legislative issues impacting public education. Armed with this information, the Indiana members then met with both Senator Braun and Senator Young and several other congressional representatives to talk about the needs of public school corporations in Indiana.

Several legislative priorities were identified by the National School Boards Association. The first was urging Congress to increase the federal share of funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Currently legislation has been introduced that would establish a ten-year authorization for full funding of the federal share of IDEA (which is 40%). NSBA encouraged support for the bipartisan, bicameral IDEA Full Funding Act. Another priority was support for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. NSBA advocated for strengthening educator

preparation programs, including preparing a new generation of special education and preschool teachers. Additionally, NSBA urged Congress to include the Preparing and Retaining Education Professionals Act as part of the reauthorization process. The PREP Act would help address teacher and principal shortages, especially in rural areas.

NSBA also asked school board members to urge Congress to explore opportunities to improve the nation's infrastructure, and in particular, student access to high capacity broadband connectivity. Currently, the Federal Communications Commission has proposed a rule that would place a new overall cap on the Universal Service Fund, and potentially negatively impact the E-Rate Program. The House of Representatives voted to prevent implementation of the rule and NSBA called for the Senate to do the same. Finally, NSBA urged support for amendments to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 that would restore a pathway to U.S. citizenship for students previously protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

After attending these informative sessions, the FRN Committee members met with legislative aides for Senators Braun and Young to discuss the senators' positions on these federal initiatives. Individual members of the committee met with legislative aides for Representatives Baird and Pence. In addition to these scheduled meetings, members of the FRN Committee and other Indiana school board members had the opportunity to meet directly with Senators Braun and Young during an event called the Hoosier Huddle. During this hour, the senators had an active dialogue with the school board members on public education issues.

ISBA thanks FRN Committee members Jennifer Barce, Tony May, Ron Felger and Linda Singer for their participation in the Advocacy Institute on behalf of all Indiana school board members. Other school board members who attended the Advocacy Institute were Pam Knowles and Layla Spanenburg, from the Carmel Clay Schools, and Steve Corona and Glenna Jehl, from the Fort Wayne Community School Corporation.



ISBA's FRN Committee in action in Washington DC (February 2020)
Picture at left: Members of the ISBA FRN Committee with Indiana Senator Todd Young