

A Basic Right...

*A Great
Public School
for Every
Child.*

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LEA-PAC Makes Recommendations in the 2008 Legislative Races

Teachers' Salaries and Working Conditions Depend on Part to the Election of Pro-Public Education State Senators

Ranging from what you teach to how you teach and assess it as well as the financial dollars in state aid that flow to school districts that help pay teacher salaries, a teacher's daily personal as well as professional life is greatly impacted by the legislative members of the state Unicameral. Recognizing this fact, fifteen LEA and LEA-PAC members spent many long hours reading candidate questionnaires, formulating interview questions, interviewing numerous legislative candidates, deliberating, and making recommendations on whom among the many candidates running for the state legislature this year would best serve the needs of the educational community.

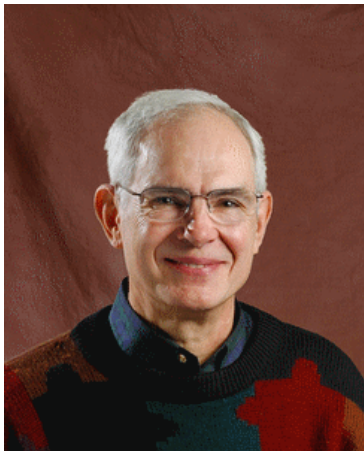
LEA-PAC (the political arm of the LEA) bases their recommendations solely on educational issues. The questionnaire that candidates fill out is developed by NSEA and adopted by the NSEA Board of Directors. The LEA-PAC Interview Teams are made up of members who are voluntary members of LEA-PAC who either live or work in the candidates' district. In order to be considered for a recommendation, candidates must both complete the written questionnaire and interview before a LEA-PAC Interview Team.

Interviews were conducted March 18 and 19. [Although Unicameral seats are considered non-partisan, the candidates' party affiliation has been noted in the recommended races detailed below.]

Legislative District 21

LD 21 is currently held by Sen. Carol Hudkins who can no longer run for office due to term limits. LEA-PAC has made a duo recommendation for this race: **Ken Haar** (D) and **Tami Soper** (D). The LEA-PAC Interview Team was impressed by Ken's former city council experience and the leadership roles he has long played. A former teacher, the Team concluded that Ken is very supportive of public education, is very intelligent, innovative, and multi-skilled. Ken reported he has already "knocked on 1300 doors" during his campaign to speak to residents of LD 21 and that he has "a passion for politics." He believes that the Unicameral needs to be more creative with property taxes and that efforts must be made to keep highly educated graduates in Nebraska; "Educate them, so they

stay here!” Ken declared to the Team.



The LEA-PAC Team was impressed by Tami Soper’s knowledge of the Unicameral, being a former legislative aide. She has lived her entire life in her district, has a mother who is a retired teacher, and the Team found her to be a quick thinker as well as a great communicator. Tami told her team, “The best investment you can make is in the educational system—it affects the whole community!” and with her legislative experience, she knows how to move a bill through the process.

Among their many pro-public education positions, **both Haar (left) and Soper support:**

☀ increasing state aid to education (“I think it is a shame that we are at or near the bottom in state funding of education. We insist that we be top notch in terms of football but are willing to settle... near the bottom in so many areas in the social arena—it is embarrassing and unnecessary!”~~ Haar. “We cannot continue to expect more from our schools while we provide fewer resources... we need to permanently increase the state aid we provide to schools.”~~ Soper);

☀ current retirement benefits for teachers;

☀ fair dismissal hearings, collective bargaining, allowing teachers throughout the state to be a part of a united health care pool (the Educators Health Alliance), and the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) which allows teachers a counter to the fact that as public employees they cannot go on strike in Nebraska but still have a recourse for unfair salary negotiations.

Both Haar and Soper (right) oppose:

☀ tax credit or vouchers for parents who send their children to private schools.

Ken Haar’s website: <http://www.haarforlegislature.com/>

Tami Soper’s website: <http://www.tamisoper.com/>



[Note: Candidates Vern Barrett and Justin Larsen were also interviewed as part of the process. Candidates James Jeffers and Curtis Schell did not respond to the questionnaire and did not have an interview with the Team.]

Legislative District 25

LD 25 is currently held by Sen. Ron Raikes who can no longer run for office due to term limits. LEA-PAC has made a duo recommendation for this race: **Kathy Campbell (R)** and **Travis Wagner (D)**. The LEA-PAC Interview team was impressed by Kathy’s experience and community connections and Travis’ knowledge and desire to see change in Nebraska’s tax structure. Both candidates came across as strong pro-public education candidates who are conscientious and electable. Kathy told her Team that the legislature needs to “look beyond today” and believes the key to student assessment is whether or not it “enhances a student’s learning.”



Travis, who is retired after forty years of active military service both in Vietnam and the National Guard said his “desire is to continue to serve” Nebraskans. He believes that “public funds are public funds” and that they must be used to “educate all of the citizens of Nebraska, not just the chosen few.”

Among their many pro-public education positions, **both Campbell (left) and Wagner support:**

☀ increasing state aid to education, current retirement benefits for teachers (“...a good plan” ~~ Campbell; “one of the financial building blocks for an enjoyable retirement”~~ Wagner);

☀ fair dismissal hearings, collective bargaining, allowing teachers throughout the state to be a part of a united health care pool (the Educators Health Alliance), and the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) which allows teachers a counter to the fact that as public employees they cannot go on strike in Nebraska but still have a recourse for unfair salary negotiations.

Both Campbell and Wagner (right) oppose:

☀ tax credit or vouchers for parents who send their children to private schools and public school diplomas for home schooled children.

Kathy Campbell’s website: <http://www.kathycampbell.org/>

Travis Wagner’s website: <http://www.wagnerforlegislature.com/>

[Note: Candidate Brent Smoyer was also interviewed as part of the process.]



Legislative District 27

LD 25 is currently held by Sen. DiAnna Schimek who can no longer run for office due to term limits. LEA-PAC has recommended **Dan Marvin** (D) for this race. The LEA-PAC Interview Team was impressed by Dan’s in-depth study of the issues and his ability to listen and articulate his ideas as well. He is seen as a coalition builder looking for creative answers and has a good understanding of the demands of elected officials having served on the Lincoln Lancaster County Planning Commission as well as currently serving on the City Council.

The Team was struck by Dan’s skill of looking at issues from multiple views and his support of the public schools and teachers. Dan told his Team that he finds Nebraska’s ranking of 44th in the nation for teacher salaries as “not acceptable... If the funding system works, then why do we rank 44th in the nation for teacher pay?” When it comes to state aid he is “not sure Lincoln is getting a good deal.”



Among his many pro-public education positions, **Marvin (left) supports:**

☀ increasing state aid to education, fair dismissal hearings (“I have seen this process play out and I believe it is fair”), collective bargaining, allowing teachers throughout the state to be a part of a united health care pool (the Educators Health Alliance), and the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) which allows teachers a counter to the fact that as public employees they cannot go on strike in Nebraska but still have a recourse for unfair salary negotiations (“I have first hand experience with the use of the CIR. I understand the detractors of the CIR but I also understand the benefits”), and current retirement benefits for teachers.

Marvin opposes tax credit or vouchers for parents who send their children to private schools and public school diplomas for home schooled children.

Dan Marvin’s web site: <http://marvinforlegislature.com/>

[Note: Candidate Chuck Stepanek was also interviewed as part of the process. Candidate Colby Coash did not respond to the questionnaire and did not have an interview with the Team.]

Legislative District 29

LD 29 is currently held by Sen. Tony Fulton who was appointed to the position by Governor Heineman to succeed Senator Mike Foley. Because Tony is not considered an incumbent, an early endorsement was ruled out and it was requested that the senator go through the process along with any other candidates from the District. LEA-PAC has recommended **Tony Fulton** for this race. Following the interview with Tony, the LEA-PAC team concluded that he is a superb listener, bright, and a quick study who understands how policies fit together and how to work with other people in the legislature. The Team believes the senator is predictable and

that when he supports the Association on an issue, that support is and will be legitimate and he will serve as an advocate. Senator Fulton (**right**) is, the Team agreed, a person with whom it is possible to disagree and still maintain a respectful relationship.



Among his many pro-public education positions, **Fulton supports:**

☀ increasing state aid to education (“Part of my tenure has been and will continue to be the intelligent growth of our state’s economy. As such, I will work on policy to grow state aid to schools with income and sales taxation... I owe a great deal of my present successes to the education I received in Auburn Public Schools”), current retirement benefits for teachers, fair dismissal hearings, collective bargaining, and allowing teachers throughout the state to be a part of a united health care pool (the Educators Health Alliance).

Fulton opposes vouchers for parents who send their children to private schools and doesn’t believe a diploma to a home school graduate would “contain the same meaning and value” as for a student “who attended the public school.”

Senator’s Fulton’s website: <http://tonyfulton.com/>

Fulton Campaign Request: Yard Sign Delivery April 12/13---We will plan on having Tony's house as the headquarters on Saturday April 12th beginning at 9am. Tony lives at 5935 S 53rd St in Lincoln. **WE ARE IN NEED OF ABOUT 31 VOLUNTEERS FOR THIS!** If you would be willing to help, please contact Justin Fulton at jfulton19@hotmail.com. Food will be provided for volunteers. We will need volunteers to deliver yard signs to houses who have requested them.

[Note: Candidate Susan Scott was also interviewed as part of the process.]

Your LEA-PAC Interview Team Members

The interview committee members worked long into the evening following a full day of teaching (one Team, those who interviewed for District 21, were at the LEA office *two* nights in a row). The teams were made up of the following *dedicated and hard-working LEA and LEA-PAC members all of whom we owe a round of applause:*

- ◆ **Jenni Absalon**, Maxey
- ◆ **Sarah Doan**, Pound
- ◆ **Linda Freye**, Maxey
- ◆ **Marge Keep**, East
- ◆ **Jen Mikkelsen**, Hartley
- ◆ **Stephanie Nantkes**, Arnold
- ◆ **Sharon Nore**, LEA-Retired
- ◆ **Deb Rasmussen**, Goodrich
- ◆ **Daniel Ross**, Calvert
- ◆ **Tammy Shafer**, Holmes
- ◆ **Bob Shaw**, Goodrich
- ◆ **Kathy Spahr**, Culler
- ◆ **Nissa Sturgeon**, Park

Dan Studer, LEA UniServ Director, is the staff liaison to LEA-PAC.

Now It Is Your Turn!!!!!!!!!!

Educators don’t often stop to think exactly how huge and constant the influence of the members of the Unicameral is upon the classroom. Even when they do, members often don’t know how they can make a difference and impact the situation. *Here are some suggestions:*

1. **Get to know the candidates** running in your legislative District. Visit their websites. If they knock on your door, let them know you are an educator in the public schools and what some of your concerns are and ask them how they intend to make a difference.

2. **Tell your family and friends** about the importance of electing pro-public education senators and about the LEA-PAC recommended candidates.
3. **Get involved** in a recommended candidate's campaign: distribute flyers, make a donation, take a yard sign, or otherwise answer calls for assistance from LEA-PAC as needs of the candidates are become known and are sent out to the membership. **Above all:**
4. **Vote in the primary on Tuesday, May 13, 2008!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

