

'Tis the Season for More Than Trick-Or-Treats!

In Other Words: Politics, Politics, Politics!

Recommendations to members in political races can be a sensitive thing. Most educators look at a diverse number of issues when it comes to the candidates they support and members cover the spectrum of Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian and others and everything from liberal to conservative (sometimes with a mixture or range of both).

Some educators do not like to see the Association involved in politics, but politics and politicians have become a very real part of the education profession controlling the money that flows to schools, the curriculum that is taught, and policies that affect education and educators. The list of ways in which elected officials impact what happens in the classroom and our schools on a daily basis is almost endless. As the past NEA President Reg Weaver was fond of saying, "When politicians get out of education, then educators can get out of politics."

When the Association makes recommendations in political races, the recommendations are always (1) based upon education issues, only, and (2) the decisions are all member driven. A reminder: members' dues dollars are not used to support political campaigns of candidates.

Below are this year's political recommendations from the various levels of the Association and the rationale for the recommendations for your consideration.

Local Recommendations for the Nebraska Legislature

Members of the Lincoln Education Association Political Action Committee (LEA-PAC) recommended, based upon both written questions and answers and in-person interviews the candidates for state office below. Additionally, the LEA-PAC recommendations have been endorsed by Capitol District and, therefore, NSEA.

Legislative District 21: Ken Haar (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 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. Haar: "Educate them, so they stay here!"

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

Legislative District 25: 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."

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

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

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Legislative District 27: Dan Marvin (D). 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." Dan Marvin's web site: <http://marvinforlegislature.com/>

Legislative District 29: Tony Fulton. Following the interview with Tony, the LEAPAC 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 is, the Team agreed, a person with whom it is possible to disagree and still maintain a respectful relationship. Senator's Fulton's website: <http://tonyfulton.com/>

For more detailed information on the above candidates' education positions, see last year's *LEAdvocate* devoted to the recommendations at: http://lincolneducationassociation.org/files/Advocate_12_2007-20082.pdf

State Senate Race and UN Board of Regents



The Nebraska State Education Association Board of Directors has recommended **Scott Kleeb (D)** for Senate. A team of NSEA members, evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, interviewed Kleeb and his opponent. Kleeb places the federal education budget at the top of his priorities as a potential senator saying, "Everything else we talk about, health care, the economy — everything — comes from a well-educated base." Kleeb also favors full funding of the No Child Left Behind Act; increased funding for Pell

Grants; improved teacher pay; and improved funding for early childhood education.

The Board also approved the recommendation of **Earl Scudder** to the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, representing the Lincoln and Lancaster County area. In his interview with NSEA Scudder emphasized the demographic challenge in Nebraska and sees education as an economic engine. He emphasized his union background and support for collective bargaining, particularly with regard to mid-point salaries for faculty. He indicated the need for more state support for higher education.

President of the United States

Delegates to the 2008 Representative Assembly recommended **Barack Obama** for President. In a release this September from NEA, the national association made the following points about the Obama-Biden 21st Century Education Plan:



NEA applauds Senator Obama's comprehensive approach and vision for reforming the public education system. We agree with Senator Obama that America must act to improve public schools so that students are prepared to compete in a global society – but also to be active and thoughtful citizens in our democracy.

We welcome Senator Obama's commitment to turn the page on finger pointing and bickering. We must work together to take meaningful steps to build a public education system that works for our students and communities.

- **Obama recognizes that all of us have a role to play to make the changes our schools need— there is no silver bullet.** It will take a comprehensive action plan to improve our public schools. Obama has the vision and energy to work to make that happen with parents, educators, and other stakeholders in the educational system.

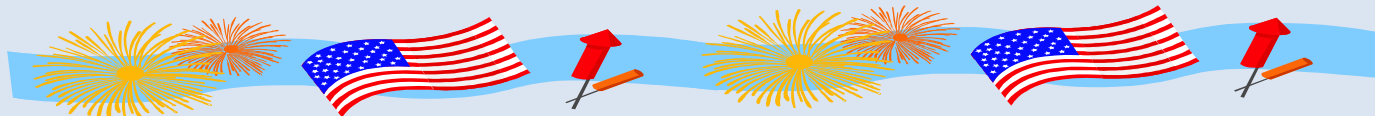
- **Obama understands how to make meaningful and lasting change. He will:**

- ✓ **Promote innovation** within the public schools. We agree with Senator Obama's position of promoting models such as career and technical education academies and well-designed and accountable public charter schools. These and other examples of innovation within the public school system should be scaled up when they succeed.
- ✓ **Focus on college readiness and completion** by increasing students' access to Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other college level coursework; increasing college awareness; and supporting initiatives such as dual enrollment to keep students interested in lifelong learning experiences.
- ✓ **Invest in innovation and technology.** We agree that schools need to integrate technology in coursework and develop better assessments so that teachers have real time results that help them focus on individual needs and talents throughout the school year rather than a one-size-fits all standardized test with results that come back too late for use.
- ✓ **Promote parental/community responsibility.** We applaud the senator's focus on providing parents with needed information and hope that the periodic reports he calls for also would include information on community programs aimed help parents find other critical resources, such as community health centers, mental health services, food banks or other critical family needs.
- ✓ **Invest in what works:** we agree that including educators, academics, and other stakeholders in discussions of what actually works in the classroom is a promising step forward for the education research agenda.

We especially support Senator Obama's vision of a revitalized profession of teaching. Senator Obama understands the value of residency programs, of mentoring, of the available of tools to be successful, and of professional pay.

We praise Senator Obama's recognition that educators and their representatives already work with districts to develop innovative compensation systems that align with the needs in those particular districts. We know that those discussions need to continue to reside at the local level if they are to succeed.

NEA believes that Senator Obama offers the ideas and the skills to fast-track the movement to make every public school great.



For a side-by-side comparison between Barack Obama and John McCain on education issues, please go to the following LEA web page:

http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/files/NEA_Obama_McCain_Comparative_Flyer.pdf

LEA urges all members to actively participate in the November 4th election and VOTE and please consider supporting pro-public education candidates recommended to you by your colleagues at the local, state, and national level.

