



Lights!
Camera!
Action!

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Questions/comments?

- ask@scsba.org
- 1.800.236.3994

Remember turn down your television volume if calling in a comment/question during the program to avoid feedback.

Teleconference program

1. **Welcome**
Bruce Davis, SCSBA President and Hampton Two Board Member
2. **Teleconference purposes**
Debbie Elmore, SCSBA Communications Director
3. **Education Funding** featuring video interview with Rep. Dan Cooper, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee
Scott Price, SCSBA General Counsel
4. **Other legislative issues**
Duane Cooper, SCSBA Legislative and Advocacy Coordinator
Damon Jeter, SCSBA Legislative Consultant
5. **Effectively communicating the budget crisis** featuring video panel discussion with:
 - Mary Beth Hill, Communications Director, Lexington One Schools
 - Elaine Baker, Communications Director, Rock Hill Three Schools
 - Dr. Frank Morgan, Superintendent, Kershaw County Schools
 - Mary Anne Byrd, Communications Director, Kershaw County Schools
6. **Education Votes 2010** featuring video interview with Carey Crantford of Crantford and Associates
Duane Cooper
7. **Comments, questions and answers**
Paul Krohne, SCSBA Executive Director
8. **Closing remarks**

Teleconference technical information

The teleconference will air from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 30, 2010, on SCETV digital satellite channel 4, which is only available at school sites through the Digital Education Services. Test screens will be available beginning at 5:30 p.m. District media specialists or local DES (Digital Education Services) personnel are strongly encouraged to test the channel prior to the event.

Receiving sites will need to retune their ETV Pansat 2700A receivers in order to get ETV digital satellite programming. The procedure is very simple and only needs to be done once and should take less than five minutes. SCETV has staff available to assist schools. Contact Sherry O'Konek at ETV at 888.761.8132.

If further assistance is needed, contact ETV's School Services at 800.277.3245 or ETV's Educational Technology at 800.922.4848. Also available is David Beverly, Sr., director of Educational Technology at 803.737.8288 (office) or 803.530.2492 (cell).

Boardmanship Institute points

Board or superintendent secretaries/clerks must send the names of board members who participate in the teleconference to Sandy Poole by email at spoole@scsba.org or by calling 800.326.3679 by Friday, October 8, 2010, to receive 5 points and 2 hours of credit. The teleconference will also be available to view online for those board members who could not participate. A link will be emailed to school districts after the teleconference.

Advocacy starts now!

The purpose of the teleconference is to provide school board members, educators and other public school advocates with information on issues likely to be debated by the General Assembly in 2011 and discuss the importance of the



general election in November.

School boards should use the information for discussions with their legislative delegation before legislators return to Columbia in early January.

While education advocates recognize that the General Assembly is facing difficult decisions in a state with many pressing needs, none of those needs is more critical to our short-term progress and long-term prosperity than education. As school board members, educators and public school supporters, your voices will be critical in advocating for the kind of funding reform our schools need now and in the future.

The following is a summary of the legislative issues we will preview during the teleconference. Participants are encouraged to study the issues and email questions (please provide your name, title and school district) in advance or during the program to ask@scsba.org. Participants will also be able to ask questions or offer comments during the program by calling the toll-free number 1.800.236.3994. Please remember to turn down the volume of the television set when calling to avoid audio feedback on the air.

Education funding reform proposal

Background

Education funding in South Carolina is in crisis. A "perfect storm" churns on the horizon containing elements that, separately, cause big fiscal problems for K-12 schools and, taken as a whole, will inflict damage that may be beyond repair.

Proposals for how to fund schools will be considered in 2011 and there are several groups and individuals studying the issue with the intent of bringing a plan forward. These include:

- Senate Select Committee on K-12 Funding
- Index of Taxpaying Ability Study Committee
- A Lowcountry senator whose plan will ensure all districts receive state foundation funding



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- Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee
- Taxation Realignment Commission (TRAC), which will make recommendations in November that will impact state revenue and education funding

There is an expectation among many state leaders for the education community to bring a funding plan to the table. This year, SCSBA is partnering with the South Carolina Association of School Administrators to develop a comprehensive approach to education funding reform. With the expertise of Dr. Harry Miley, noted economist and former chairman of the South Carolina Board



of Economic Advisors (BEA), we will be able to determine the potential impact on local districts, as well as certain state- and local-level revenue projections for our final proposal.

The proposal must be systemic and, by necessity, recognize the dire economic situation that confronts the state as well as the current political climate. It will draw on previous efforts at funding reform, including the Task Force on Funding for World Class Learning from its 2007 report, financial reforms outlined by the Education Oversight Committee, the equalized funding plan crafted by school business officials during 2003-04 (a statewide uniform millage rate proposal), and data and information developed by TRAC.

The following are overarching goals for the SCSBA/SCASA funding proposal:

- Simplify the entire funding system for K-12
- Ensure the funding system provides sufficient revenue for every district to be better off compared to no reform and the “perfect storm” threatening in the 2011-12 funding year.
- Protect the authority of local district boards to increase local funding.
- Include provisions to protect against the erosion of the local property tax base and shore up local revenue.

Any proposal, however, must go beyond merely distributing the dwindling state dollars for public schools. It must address state tax revenue sources and distribution to school districts, as well as the relationship of state and local tax structures. The following are some, but not all, areas likely to be addressed in the SCSBA/SCASA funding proposal:

- A renewed commitment to state-local shared fundamental funding, as well as to determining a true base student cost (aligned with state-imposed student performance standards and expectations) with a growth mechanism and additional (new) weightings, such as a poverty weighting. Local share funding

could be raised by the use of a state-imposed uniform millage rate, with the state paying the balance. However, local millage rates could not be reduced except to the extent that there are other reliable, recurring revenue sources to replace it.

- A plan to direct more state resources to the needier districts for school facilities, without reductions to other districts.
- Measures to ensure that the state’s tax structure, particularly in relation to economic development incentives, does not negatively impact on local tax bases.
- Clearly identify and designate local discretionary funding, as well as related local board and district governance issues.
- The Act 388 homestead exemption for school operations and what changes are feasible, including local voter-approved referendum for funding school operations from owner-occupied property taxes.

Position statement

SCSBA supports legislation to reform the state’s education funding structure. Any revision should be based upon specific analysis and recommendations on (1) the current tax structure and the state’s taxing policy, (2) the current education funding formulas and their ability to equalize educational opportunities statewide, and, (3) a realistic means of computing the base student cost which is aligned with state-imposed student performance standards and expectations. Recommendations for reforming the method of funding public education in South Carolina must do the following:

- expand local district revenue-raising authority;
- generate revenue that is adequate, stable and recurring;
- ensure equitable and timely distribution, to include direct distribution from the state to a district;



- provide adequate funding for other operational needs such as transportation and fringe; and,
- include state-driven initiatives to ensure that every public school student has the opportunity to learn in permanent school facilities that are safe, structurally sound and conducive to a good learning environment.

Talking points

- With the passage of the property tax relief act (Act 388) in 2006, the General Assembly significantly impaired the ability of local school boards to raise operational millage. Act 388 removed owner occupied houses from being taxed for school operations purposes and put in place a hard cap on a local board's ability to raise millage on the remaining classes of property. Locally funded programs and community-driven school initiatives will suffer. Act 388 imposed a state 1-cent sales tax to replace the lost property tax revenue from houses. The stability of education funding now rests with the volatile sales tax. In addition, Homestead Exemption Fund (HEF) reimbursements – made from the 1-cent sales tax revenue - are not adequate to replace the revenue from houses in suburban areas. There is a large and growing gap between the property tax revenue that houses would be paying if not exempt from district operational taxes and the reimbursement from the state's HEF. Districts, in short, are severely hampered in their ability to finance growth.
- Shortly after the passage of Act 388, the national economy spiraled and South Carolina enacted mid-year budget cuts. Reductions to South Carolina K-12 public schools totaled \$387 million in FY 2009-10. Further reductions in state funding during the legislative budgeting process for FY 2010-11 meant that K-12 public schools are now operating with about



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\$750 million less in state funding than what they started off with in FY 2008-09. Further, economic forecasts show a bleak outlook in 2011 coupled with the loss of some \$400 million in federal stimulus funding.

- The state Education Finance Act, the primary funding source for public schools that, among other things, establishes the base student cost (BSC), is now being funded at a level reflecting the year 1995. The EFA has remained relatively unchanged since it was enacted in 1977.
- School districts are finding it increasingly difficult to preserve school tax millage for use



exclusively for school purposes due to the erosion of the local tax base. Economic development incentives such as fee in lieu of taxes (FILOT) and multi-county industrial parks are two examples of the erosion of school districts' tax base. During the past decade every variable in the property tax formula has been limited, flattened or reduced. Fair market value as the starting point for taxation has been abandoned by the 15 percent reassessment limit in Act 388. Exemptions have been relentlessly expanded, which include both the homestead for school operations and the older exemption for FILOTs and multi-county industrial parks. Assessment ratios have been reduced; millage rates have been tightly limited; and revenue can be and has been diverted to other purposes.

Charter School Legislation

Background

During the 2010 legislative session, a bill to enact major revisions to South Carolina's Charter School Act passed the House but died in the Senate. A similar, if not the same bill, will likely be filed in 2011 and move quickly through the House. Some of the anticipated key provisions are as follows:

- Converted charter schools would have the right to use facilities and equipment in the same manner as before with no additional fees or charges by the local district for the duration of the charter contract, or ten years.
- A state facilities revolving loan program would be established for all charter schools to use for construction, purchase, renovation and maintenance.
- Charter school students must be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities if the activities are not available at the charter school.

- Deletes the current requirement that a private school which converts to a charter school must close for a year before it begins the application process.
- Allows up to 2 percent for a sponsor fee that may be retained from the charter school allocation for fulfilling sponsor obligations.
- Sponsoring districts would be responsible for ensuring special education students are served properly in all charter schools.
- Increases from 60 to 90 days for the State Charter School Advisory Committee's review of each charter school application and increases from 30 to 45 days for the local school board review.
- Makes revocation or nonrenewal of a charter school's contract as an option under certain circumstances rather than a mandatory requirement.

Position statements

- Delegates to SCSBA's 2010 Delegate Assembly in December will considered a newly proposed belief statement as follows: "SCSBA believes that all charter schools in South Carolina should be sponsored and funded by the state. SCSBA believes that traditional public schools should qualify for exemptions from provisions of state law and regulation as granted to charter schools."
- SCSBA opposes state-mandated participation by non-district students in public school interscholastic activities and programs.

Talking Points

- Although the local funding requirement was removed in this year's bill, there is a continuing claim by charter schools that they need additional funding. The state charter school district was formed with the clear understanding that there would be no local funds provided or needed. If the state determines that state charter schools are under-funded then



it should be the state's responsibility to fund these schools not the local taxpayers.

- Enough is enough! Traditional public schools have been hit with unprecedented budget cuts totaling \$484 million over the past two years. The base student cost is currently \$1,630 per student, which reflects 1995 funding levels. Until funding for traditional public schools can be fully restored, the General Assembly should not approve any legislation that will increase any type of financial obligation to local school districts.
- There are continuing concerns with several of the proposal's provisions including the facilities and equipment use provision, private school conversion changes and participation in extracurricular activities mandates.

School snack bill

Background

During the 2010 legislative session, a bill passed the house to restrict fat, calorie and sugar content for school snacks, foods and beverages sold during the school day. However, the bill died in the Senate after it was amended to restrict the sale of fundraising items to students before and after school hours. It is likely that a similar bill will be filed in 2011.

Position statement

SCSBA believes that child nutrition is vitally important in fostering a healthy and positive learning environment for children to achieve their full potential. However, school nutrition programs simply cannot be successful unless school districts providing them have sufficient resources and local authority to administer them effectively.

Talking points

- School boards are acutely aware of the importance of ensuring that students have access



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to healthy and nutritious food and many have already taken proactive steps to improve school nutrition. These successes have proven that awareness and education – not state mandates -- will spur parents and communities to make the changes that are absolutely necessary for long-term success.

- Most, if not all school districts have policies that reflect federal, state and industry standards concerning healthy nutritional options for students.
- Good nutrition is most important to fostering a healthy learning environment for children; however, no bill should impose overly burden-



some and restrictive requirements on districts without funding to implement changes

- No school food bill should undermine the work of school or district wellness committees that engage members of their communities about student health issues.
- Any state effort in this area should wait until Congress has taken action on the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill.

Vouchers/tuition tax credits

Background

Voucher and tuition tax credit proposals continue to surface in the General Assembly year after year. There have been at least six versions of a voucher and tuition tax credit scheme, ranging from providing tax credits to families who pay tuition to private schools or home schools, to providing private school vouchers for children who live in “failing schools.” All of these plans would drain public school dollars.

Position statement

SCSBA opposes state or federally-mandated efforts to directly or indirectly subsidize elementary or secondary private, religious or home schools with public funds.

Talking points

Unaffordable

- At a time when South Carolina public schools are faced with tremendous economic challenges in many years, a publicly-funded tuition tax credit or voucher program that would drain even more funds is unconscionable.
- Financial impact statements of voucher and tuition tax credit legislation filed in South Carolina in the past have ranged from more than \$84 million to \$560 million in lost state and local revenues.
- Research of existing programs shows vouchers often become a subsidy for private

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

- Vouchers are direct state support of religious schools and constitutionally suspect. The Arizona Supreme Court declared the state’s school-voucher programs unconstitutional because they violate a ban against appropriating public money for private or religious schools. South Carolina has similar constitutional language.

Unproven

- In March of 2009, the first research since the mid- 1990s comparing the academic progress of students in Milwaukee’s private school voucher program with students in Milwaukee Public Schools shows 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 public school peers and mirrors findings of previous studies of the program.
- A 2006 study of the Cleveland 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 second and fourth grade 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.



- Vouchers and tuition tax credits do nothing to address the challenges in many low performing schools such as high concentration of poverty, high teacher and administrator turnover rates, and lack of resources and community support systems.

Unaccountable

- Public dollars will be used to fund private education for a select few with absolutely no public accountability of how the money is spent, the quality of schools receiving the money, or what academic achievement results it produces.
- Private and religious schools are not required to follow the same state and federal education accountability requirements of public schools such as content standards, annual testing, annual school report cards, hiring highly qualified teachers, etc.
- In reality, it is the private school – not the parent – that decides if a student can attend their school.

Mandated district/services consolidation

Background

The issue of state mandated consolidation of school districts or district services will likely surface in the form of a bill or as a budget proviso in 2011 as lawmakers struggle to fund education.

Position statement

SCSBA supports consolidation or deconsolidation of school districts provided that in each district affected a referendum is held and a majority of the voters voting in the referendum in each affected district authorizes consolidation or deconsolidation. Each district must have equal voice in the consolidation or deconsolidation question. We oppose state-mandated efforts to consolidate or deconsolidate districts.

Talking points

- A major consolidation of South Carolina school districts took place in the early 1950s. Since then, other districts have consolidated into larger systems. Currently, there are 85 – soon to be 84 - school districts ranging in size from 1,000 to 61,000 students. A statewide study to determine, among other things, the relationship between school district size in South Carolina and student performance and the cost of providing educational services reached no conclusion on the district size/student performance relationship.
- Items not generally considered in a fiscal impact statement that could potentially increase costs under a consolidation plan include the following:
 - ◻ District teacher salary schedules in each district would need to be increased to the highest schedule in the county.
 - ◻ School (and possibly district) administrative salaries would be adjusted to the highest paying district in the county.
 - ◻ Allocations for instructional and media supplies, materials and equipment to conform with the highest allocation of the combined districts.
 - ◻ Integration and consolidation of computer networks within the county.
 - ◻ Expansion of instructional programs that may not be offered in all districts within a county.

Sunset of S.C. Education Oversight Committee

In 2010, a bill to sunset or terminate the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and move the current duties of the committee to the South Carolina Department of Education (SDE) was filed but did not pass the House. However, during budget deliberations, the EOC survived two attempts on the House floor to sunset the agency. It is anticipated that a new bill will be filed in 2011.



Position statement

Delegates to SCSBA's 2010 Delegate Assembly in December will consider a new proposed belief statement as follows: "SCSBA believes that the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) should be abolished and its responsibilities and duties, where necessary, moved to the State Department of Education (SDE)."

Talking points

- The EOC has been largely duplicative since 2001, when the federal No Child Left Behind Act created a dueling accountability system that often replicates -- and always trumps -- South Carolina's own requirements. Our schools are now accountable to two agencies, state and federal, with similar but not identical expectations, similar but different measures, and different reporting requirements. We have spent more than \$10 million since 2001, plus untold hours of school and

district staff time, assessing a system through the EOC that the federal government requires us to assess already, in slightly different ways.

- The 18-member EOC was created in 1998 to advise officials on student performance, educational programs and public school funding in accordance with the state Education Accountability Act (EAA) and was originally designed to "sunset" in 2010.
- The EOC has served a useful purpose in overseeing the implementation of the EAA as well as issuing critical reports on topics such as school governance and district fiscal efficiency. However, in this period of economic slowdown and streamlining government, a real opportunity exists to reduce educational bureaucracy and the unnecessary and often confusing overlap of responsibilities.

Communicating the financial crisis

Our State confronts a profound fiscal crisis. As the elected and professional leaders of our public schools, we have a duty to engage and alert parents, employees, and community leaders to the financial situation of our schools.

State general fund support for education is at 1995 levels when gas was \$1 a gallon and grocery bills were half of what they are today. Schools have absorbed funding cuts totaling more than \$700 million over the past three years. Unless there is a willingness of state leaders to reform funding now, we will continue to undermine the State's decades-long efforts to raise student academic achievement and personal income, as well as other policy objectives, most notably, economic development.

School boards and educators should use this

crisis as an opportunity to engage all stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, business leaders, lawmakers and members of the community) in a discussion about the future of education funding. Ed Moore, long-time member of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and professor at Rowan University (N.J.), offers the following dos and don'ts when developing messages and tactics for communicating school district budgets and finances:



- DO focus messages on our state's future, individual students and neighborhood schools. For most people, perceptions about school budget issues will flow from the ways in which they personalize the issues.
- DON'T list proposed cuts generically, such as miscellaneous art materials. If planned cuts mean that you will no longer give art supplies to high school students, say it.
- DO develop communication tactics targeted to key audiences, including parents, staff, students, elected officials, business leaders, seniors, and more.
- Do encourage staff to help communicate and reinforce vital information. Arm them with prepared answers to frequent questions, resources for more information, and training on how to communicate and build understanding and support.
- DO use plain language and images to talk about finances and numbers. Stay away from suspicion-arousing jargon and acronyms that taxpayers won't understand. Use everyday words with concrete meanings, such as costs and revenues. Don't bloat copy for simple terms, such as light and heat, with puffed up mumbo jumbo like environmental management or HVAC consumption.
- DON'T use millions.
- DO create images that people can visualize and relate to: cost per child, cost per household, cost per classroom and so on. Explain costs in terms of an average taxpayer. Examples: Less than the cost of a tank of gas. Less than the price of two movie tickets.
- DO partner with local news media to help get the word out and establish outside endorsements. Help news media understand the process in which budgets and numbers evolve. Be tolerant with reporters and express a willingness to help them better understand the many complex and overwhelming budget intricacies

that are a part of the issue. Plan to meet with editors and, when appropriate, actively solicit their editorial support for school finance issues. And most importantly for South Carolina schools, DON'T let your legislators come to Columbia without a good understanding of your school district's financial situation, issues and challenges.

Framing the fund balance issue

As funding becomes scarce, fingers begin to point to how much a school district has in its fund balance. This fund is viewed by some as a savings account that should be used before eliminating teachers or programs.

Reserves are not a savings account

Community and state leaders need to understand what a fund balance is and how it differs from a personal savings account. Many districts have board policies that require a certain percentage be retained to cover emergencies and it is often used to cover cash shortfalls throughout the year. Explain how your district's fund balance aligns with this goal and how it's being used.

- Explain your policies and goals. A district with very a low fund balance may be questioned about its money management skills: be prepared to explain.
- Explain how the state's budget cuts, rising health insurance and retirement rates impact your school district.
- Communicate early and often with key audiences, especially if difficult decisions are being made now or in the future.
- Rather than talking about fund balances from a technical dollars and cents perspective, talk about the practical side of your fund budget and how it relates to cuts, or prevention of cuts, and the inevitable impact on young people, the classroom, the community and most importantly the taxpayer. Remember public education is NOT a for-profit business. The money you



spend is the public's money and they have a right to know how it's being used.

Key Messages

What is a Fund Balance?

A fund balance is the difference between the money that comes into the district (through state aid, federal money, grants etc.) and the money that is spent (salaries, text books, maintenance costs, utility bills etc.)

A district's fund balance is in place to protect programs for that community's children. Schools want to ensure that they graduate students with the skills to succeed in work and life. A fund balance is a one-time source of funding, not an ongoing revenue source. The fund balance is NOT comparable to a person's savings account. It is NOT all cash that can be used for any purpose.

Three reasons for having a fund balance

1. Helps protect a district from borrowing for cash flow issues (tax anticipation notes); because there are some months each year during which schools do not receive funds from the state, yet payrolls must be met, bills must be paid.
2. Provides a way to set money aside for repairs (roof) maintenance (new heating systems etc.), purchases (buses, textbooks) or emergencies.
3. Uncertainty about state and federal funding. Schools did a better job of projecting the economy than state government did! Some were able to put money away to prepare for the inevitable budget shortages under Act 388 due to tax reductions. Others have not been so fortunate.

What general rules apply?

As a general rule, leading bonding agencies including Moody's and Standard and Poor's and professional governmental organizations like

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommend school districts maintain a fund balance in the range of 8 - 17% of their general operating budget to cover at least three months of operating expenses. In simple terms, this level of fund balance is necessary to avoid borrowing whenever gaps between the receipt of state and local funding and expenses for payroll and other items must be paid. Having a financial cushion allows a district to avoid drastic changes in educational programs and/or employee layoffs during the school year.

Sample fund balance explanation letter to legislators

Dear [name]:

The [school district] audited fund balance as of [date] is [\$ amount] of which \$ is designated for future expenditures. The designated amount is basically to help offset [insert reasons]. The annual general operating budget for [school district] is \$ million. The total fund balance represents [amount %] of our general fund budget.

The purposes of focusing on a healthy fund balance are as follows:

- Bond rating companies like Moody's and Standard and Poor's and professional governmental organizations like GFOA recommends a fund balance in the range of 8 % to 17%. The reasons are to be able to maintain a positive bond rating on the bonds we have on the books and the new bonds that we might issue are seen favorably by the bond market and the possible buyers of our bonds. With a better rating, we are afforded a better interest rate when our rating is high making the cost of financing facilities or a borrowing for a tax anticipation note or even a bond refunding is lower. This is because our debt is considered risk free. If we had a fund balance in the range of 17 %, [school district] might be able to consider a much smaller tax



anticipation note or even eliminate the need for one all together.

- A healthy fund balance allows to us manage through these tough economic times and allows us to maintain focus on the classroom like not having to impact class size or not having to implement staff furloughs. These two cost saving measures we believe negatively impacts our mission to educate all our children.
- Just as economic times being tough, we also have to be ready for emergencies that would

impact the safety of our children. This healthy fund balance allows us to be ready in case of an event like a hurricane or whatever might come our way.

I hope this information has been helpful. If you have any questions please feel free to call on me.

Sincerely,

[name]



EDUCATION VOTES 2010

Education Votes 2010

The 2010 elections will be a “change election” in South Carolina. On November 2, 2010, voters will elect a new governor, lieutenant governor, superintendent of education, attorney general and a number of state representatives. The outcome of these races could dramatically impact public education. Public education supporters and advocates should take steps now to prepare for the election year. 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 influence the outcome of an election. Also, district policies prohibit campaigning for candidates – or campaign materials – on school or district property.

Actions & Efforts

- *Support pro-public education candidates*
Contribute/donate to pro-public education candidates. Campaigns need money to be successful. Any donation, no matter the amount, can have a significant role in successful campaigns.
- *Volunteer*
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.
- *Educate the community about the candidates*
Educating the community, especially the public education community, about candidates and their positions on education issues is very



important. A list of candidates running for state House and statewide races is available at scsba.org. The following are tips to organize a candidates' forum:

1. *Set date, time and location*
By hosting your forum an hour before your scheduled meeting, you allow easy participation for district staff, administrators, teachers, parents, as well as media. Because board meetings may take place in rooms with limited space, the board may decide to host the forum in an auditorium or gym.
2. *Invite the candidates (see sample letter)*
The invitation should be made either in person or by telephone and followed up with a written letter stating the specific date and time of the event. In the letter, include specific questions or themes you would like the candidates to address during their appearance.
3. *Select an unbiased moderator and time-keeper*
Select an unbiased moderator who can provide the event rules, pose questions to the candidates and moderate the discussion. Local news reporters, retired district personnel or local community leaders are ideal selections for moderators. Identify an official time-keeper to monitor time and signal when time has expired. Be sure to monitor candidates' speaking time and ensure equal time and opportunity for all candidates.
4. *Decide the forum program (see sample one-hour forum format)*
The program order could consist of a welcome, candidate introductions, pre-determined questions from the moderator and questions from the audience.
5. *Advertise and invite district staff, community leaders and local media to the event.*

Sample one-hour candidates' forum format

Prior to the event

- Gather the candidates and conduct a coin-flip to decide which candidate will go first with opening statements. The candidate that loses the coin-toss will receive the first question. The candidate that wins the coin-toss will be last to give closing statements.

Opening Statements

1. Welcome everyone to the debate.
2. Announce if the debate is being videotaped and where it will be made available for viewing. (if applicable)
3. Welcome and thank candidates for agreeing to participate - Democratic Nominee _____ and Republican Nominee _____; third party candidate (name of party) _____.
4. Announce and explain the format for the debate:
 - Each candidate will have 5 minutes to give opening statements and 2 minutes for closing statements.
 - After the opening statements, each candidate will have 2 minutes to respond to each question. [Note: you will have time to ask about 10 questions or about 40 minutes for questions and responses.]
 - The moderator will have the discretion to allow a 20-second rebuttal if needed.
 - To ensure candidates stay within the time limit, the timekeeper should be seated in the front and will signal the candidates at the 30-seconds mark and sound the bell when time is up.
 - To decide which candidate goes first with opening statements and which candidate will get the first question, we flipped a coin earlier and the winner was _____ (name of candidate), who will begin with his opening statements. [name of the other candidate] will follow with his opening state-



ments and get the first question.

Question Period

- Each candidate will receive the same question.
- You may decide that the final question be an opportunity for each candidate to ask his or her opponent one question. Again, each candidate will have two minutes to respond.

Closing Statements (at about the 50-minute mark)

- Announce that it is time for closing statements and as stated in the beginning, the winner of the coin toss will give his/her closing remarks last.
- Again each candidate will have 2 minutes for closing statements.
- Thank the candidates and audience.

Sample Forum Questions

1. "What do you believe should be the core focus of public schools?"
2. What do you believe is the primary role of:
 - a. State Superintendent of Education?
 - b. Local school boards?
 - c. State Department of Education?
3. Public perception is public schools receive the bulk of lottery funds when in fact most of the funds are directed to various scholarship programs. What would you do, if anything, to redirect more lottery funds to K-12 schools either temporarily to offset state budget cuts or permanently?
4. Do you support state-mandated consolidation of school districts? (where applicable)
5. "Do you support state tax credits and/or publicly-funded vouchers for students to pay tuition to private schools?"
6. This is a two part question. Describe the effect you believe Act 388 has had on public education and if you believe the effect to be negative, what would you do as superintendent to fix the problems?

7. What is your opinion of the overall state of school facilities in South Carolina?
8. If you could reformulate public school funding in South Carolina, with whom would you consult, what would it look like, and how would you effectively advance its enactment?
9. What impact do you believe the State's education accountability and reporting requirements has on the state and a community's economic development and recruitment efforts?
10. What do you think is the primary role of a charter school?
11. Who was your favorite grade school teacher and why?

Candidates' questions (Give each candidate an opportunity to ask a question to their opponent.)

Online resources

- S.C. Election Commission (www.scvotes.org)
- S.C. Republican Party (www.scgop.com)
- S.C. Democratic Party (www.scdp.org)
- S.C. Ethics Commission (www.ethics.sc.gov)



Upcoming SCSBA events

November 17-19, 2010

Risky Business Seminar (SCSBIT members only)
Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach

December 3-5, 2010

Legislative Advocacy Conference
Crowne Plaza, Hilton Head

February 24-27, 2010

SCSBA Annual Convention
Embassy Suites at Kingston Plantation, Myrtle Beach



South Carolina School Boards Association

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