

NAESP held the Federal Relations Conference in Alexandria, Virginia February 22-24. Fifty six principals representing thirty seven states were present during a week that boasted three major happenings on Capitol Hill. President Obama met with the governors of the fifty states, held a Fiscal Responsibility Summit and presented his initial budget in a State of the Union address.

This set the stage for our meeting which focused on the importance of grassroots participation of school administrators bringing their voices to the U.S. Congress. Each congressional visit reminded our elected officials that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school” and that our role is multifaceted. We encouraged our leaders to make it a national priority to empower school principals to be key decision makers and enhance their role as effective instructional leaders.

My visits were to Senators Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker as well as Representatives Jim Cooper, Bart Gordon, and Phil Roe. I was graciously received in all five offices and met personally with Representatives Cooper and Roe. The legislative assistants in the other offices were well informed and open to my requests. NAESP had prepared a one page document outlining a request to partner with Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and enact a law that empowers principals to create and maintain high performing schools where students learn and thrive. It noted that high performing schools with a sustainable track record of success were led by effective school leaders and that our nation fails to support school leadership. In fact, NCLB created barriers for effective instructional leaders by requiring us to focus on managerial and compliance tasks instead of instruction.

In all of the visits that I have made to Capitol Hill representing TPA, this visit was one of the most positive. Many, many times we have gone asking for more money. This time money was not mentioned. We were asking for the power to do what we do best in our schools...be an effective instructional leader. Wouldn't that be a joy if that is all we had to do each day? Keep contacting your elected officials and ask them to support us in this endeavor!

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