

Report of the Government Relations Committee

By Jared Wagenknecht, Papillion-LaVista Education Association, Chair

The NSEA Government Relations Committee and government relations staff held virtual meetings in October and February. The October meeting was open to GRC members as well as other NSEA members and focused on important races in the 2018 election.

This call also focused on opportunities for political action such as phone calls to potential voters, postcard writing and canvassing. Thanks to the hard work of NSEA members across the state, 21 of 28 NSEA endorsed candidates were elected to statewide offices. In addition, there were many other successes for local races such as school boards.

The GRC call in February focused on the status of various bills in the 2019 unicameral session that are being monitored by NSEA. All 49 legislative districts have at least one individual on the Government Relations Committee. Attendance for each Zoom meeting has been slightly lower than last year but there is still good representation from members across the state.

The annual legislative dinner in Lincoln was held in March. This event had a high turnout of elected officials such as senators and state school board members and teachers from locals across the state. Facilitating face-to-face conversations such as these are key to engaging policy makers and will continue to be a focus of NSEA government relations.

In addition to holding Zoom meetings that are open to members across the state, the work of the committee was also profiled in the January 2019 edition of *The Voice*. Each issue of *The Voice* since the beginning of the legislative session in January has also featured at least one article about legislative bills and hearings, as well as opportunities for action by NSEA members. Similarly to the previous few years, NSEA has also posted highlights of testimony in committee hearings that various members have given. The GRC and NSEA will continue to look for more ways to engage members.

The government relations work of NSEA is made possible with the expert assistance of Jason Hayes, Karen Kilgarin, Brian Mikkelsen and Cathy Schapmann, who work to inform and educate policymakers, fellow educators and the public about issues affecting Nebraska students, public schools and public school employees.

We would encourage all of our members to stay informed about political events affecting education and about opportunities for activism by receiving the weekly Capitol Update email. Members who are interested can also serve on a candidate interview teams for odd-numbered legislative districts in 2020. To have your name added to the email list for the Capitol Update or to serve on candidate interview teams, please contact Cathy Schapmann at NSEA Headquarters (cathy.schapmann@nsea.org).