

Report of the Government Relations Committee
Submitted by Jared Wagenknecht, Papillion-LaVista Education Association

The NSEA Government Relations Committee and government relations staff have adapted to a uniquely challenging and important year for government relations work. All 49 legislative districts have at least one individual on the Government Relations Committee.

Since the 2020 virtual Delegate Assembly, the GRC has held one virtual committee meeting in February. Much of the other work that committee members have been engaged in during this time has occurred in the form of testifying in the legislature, postcard writing, phone banking and distributing yard signs for candidates who support public education.

In the fall of 2020 NSEA committee chairs were asked to review committee policies. GRC Chair Jared Wagenknecht and the NSEA executive team agreed that the selection of committee members from each of the 49 unicameral legislative districts by the NSEA President should occur in coordination with the governance district presidents containing such districts. The committee will also include one member from each of the State School Board districts and up to 10 additional members that may be selected by the NSEA President to maintain diversity on the committee. NSEA Board of Directors members may also serve as ex-officio members of the GRC committee unless they are otherwise named to the committee through the process outlined above.

Committee chairs were also encouraged to come up with goals for their committees for the upcoming year. Wagenknecht proposed three goals:

- 1) Update the criteria and rating scale used by candidate interview teams to create a more clear and consistent system for evaluating candidates.
- 2) Review the make-up of legislative contact and candidate recommendation committees and the degree to which these groups reflect the diversity of the membership areas they represent.
- 3) Assess the work being done by regional political action liaisons and legislative contact teams and assist these groups in engaging their elected officials.

Three subcommittees have been created to address these goals. GRC members have indicated their subcommittee preferences and will begin working on these goals over the next few months.

For the 2020 election cycle, NSEA members completed a great deal of work. There were four drive-through yard sign events. More than 100 members served on candidate interview teams and dozens volunteered to phone bank or write postcards. As a result, more than 2,600 members were reached with information about candidates who support public education. Most significantly, 14 of 20 NSEA endorsed candidates won their elections.

Committee members and NSEA members across the state continue to be involved in a variety of ways, including having these actions highlighted in *The Voice* and on social media. The government relations work of NSEA is made possible with the expert and ongoing assistance of staff and leadership. Led by Jenni Benson, Maddie Fennell, with the 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.