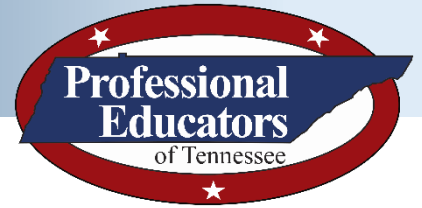


EDITORIAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCHOOL BOARDS FACE MANY CHALLENGES

School Boards face many challenges. Most school board members are men and women of high character, unappreciated for undertaking a difficult, but essential duty. Being a school board member is frequently made more difficult by a few school board members in our state and nation who behave improperly.

In September, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) sent an ill-advised letter to President Joe Biden portraying parents as “domestic terrorists.” It is like a business complaining about its customers. This has created a very strong response and backlash from parents across the nation.

In Tennessee, the Tennessee School Board Association (TSBA) had wisely departed their national organization months earlier. Like national teacher unions, the policies of national groups no longer reflect the priorities of those in our state.

The letter to President Biden was sent without TSBA knowledge, input, or approval. They were quick to distance themselves from it, saying: “NSBA’s advocacy efforts are focused more on contentious issues that divide their membership instead of educational issues that should further the mission of their members.” We strongly agree with that position.

The school board is the community’s watchdog on public education, thus ensuring that taxpayers get the most for their tax dollars. Taxpayers must hold school board members accountable for spending and results. School boards represent the public’s voice in public education. A school board must embody the community’s beliefs and values. In Tennessee, we have recognized that school board members should be as diverse as the citizens they serve.

As a non-partisan organization, we have always supported non-partisan school board races, as being what was best for our communities. However, we have always understood that many school board members are partisan. It was not very difficult to identify a person’s political affiliation. We fear that independent voices may be frozen out of the process, but we also understand we live in a very political time. So, when the general assembly made it permissible to have partisan races, we understood that in effect it didn’t change much. Still, we must all work together to educate children.

Public education is a federal concern, a state responsibility, and a local operation. Most Tennesseans strongly support local control of public education by the district board of education. This includes the autonomy of the

SUMMARY

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local school district to adopt curriculum, assessments, and programs to meet recognized educational goals and objectives. The most important role of a board of education is to hire its superintendent.

School boards are subject to the requirements of existing law and are the governing and policymaking bodies for schools in their district. They should refrain from agreements that compromise their responsibility for representing the general public interest in education. Local boards should know the unique and varied needs of their communities. They must also work with local government to further the goals of the school district.

We thank the men and women who are serving our communities as school board members. They are too often unappreciated, and it is often a thankless but important job. However, some school board members do not fully understand or appreciate their unique role, and we should look at increased training to assist them in increasing their knowledge.

The [Tennessee School Board Association](#) can play a significant function in that effort. [Professional Educators of Tennessee](#) are also glad to assist school board members when they reach out for assistance, especially in regards to the interests and concerns of educators. We provide advocacy, legal, professional learning, and benefits to educators across Tennessee.

We want to thank them for volunteering your time to make informed decisions about the difficult issues facing public schools. Also, we appreciate your advocacy on behalf of our collective interests and making very difficult decisions. We have the utmost respect for Dr. Tammy Grissom, Ben Torres and the TSBA Staff in Nashville. We appreciate this critical partnership and look forward to working to address the needs of almost 1,000,000 students here in Tennessee, especially now during challenging times.

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JC Bowman is the Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee, a non-partisan teacher association headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author and the association are properly cited. For more information on this subject or any education issue please contact Professional Educators of Tennessee. To schedule an interview please contact communications@proedtn.org or 1-800-471-4867.