



## **NDE Legislative Corner**

It was a busy week for legislation, politics and government in the education world. Commissioner Matt Blomstedt traveled to Washington D.C. with Deputy Commissioners Deb Frison and Brian Halstead for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The group met with House and Senate leaders including Senator Deb Fischer. The Commissioner also had the opportunity to meet with Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos who reaffirmed her commitment to let states lead with limited federal involvement.

At the same time, the National Association of State Boards of Education were also in D.C. Several State Board members attended along with Nebraska Department of Education staff.

Back in Nebraska, civics took center stage during an Education Committee hearing at the Capitol. Three bills were debated concerning the role of Nebraska schools in teaching civics and social studies in the future.

The Board of Education's Legislative Committee supported LB14 from Senator Bob Krist that would update current state statutes and stress learning foundational knowledge in civics, history, economics and geography. The State Board believes that students should have opportunities to use that foundational knowledge to address meaningful issues in their communities, thus encouraging greater civic participation and engagement. LB14 would include a civics test as part of the curriculum but not as a requirement for graduation.

Senator Lydia Brasch's proposed LB155 would require a civics test for all Nebraska public school students. The Board is opposed to a high stakes test required for graduation.

Finally, a great deal of news has been circulating regarding the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) School Board and their search for a new superintendent. Dr. Deb Frison has been mentioned as a possible candidate after the three finalists for the position

dropped out. Dr. Frison has indicated that she is interested in the opportunity and has the full support of Commissioner Blomstedt should that opportunity arise. There has been no formal contact regarding the position and Dr. Frison remains dedicated to her work at NDE.

The State Board also remains dedicated to providing leadership and support for OPS and all schools and districts. One priority school and 28 "Needs Improvement" schools in the AQuESTT classification system are in the OPS district and the State Board is particularly concerned with improving results in those schools and is heavily invested in assisting all schools in OPS to improve.

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David Jespersen  
Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education  
402-471-4537  
[david.jespersen@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.jespersen@nebraska.gov)