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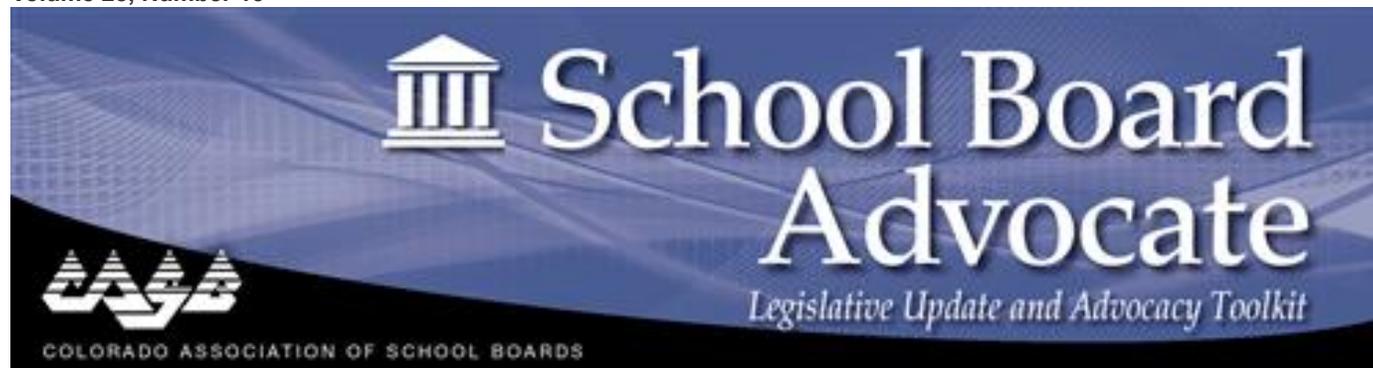


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## School Board Advocate: October 27, 2017

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## Democratic, GOP Gubernatorial Candidates Split on School Funding

During the Fall Delegate Assembly Conference on Friday, October 13, 2017, CASB hosted a candidate's forum from both parties. The forum, which had a panel for each party, asked the candidates questions related to education in order to gain a better understanding of where they stand. CASB members quickly learned that Republican and Democratic politicians think differently about Colorado's school funding situation and how to fix it.

Matt Cook, CASB director of public policy and advocacy, asked candidates on each panel whether there's a K-12 funding crisis and how they would address school funding. Candidates also shared their views in response to audience questions about the negative factor and the overall state budget.



The four Democrats who attended the event generally agreed that the state school finance system is in crisis and that more tax revenue is needed to adequately fund Colorado's 178 school districts.

Most of the Democratic candidates said Colorado "absolutely" has a school funding crisis, and Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne said, "It cannot be fixed within the existing state budget... We need more money," criticizing GOP candidates who stated otherwise.

Former state Sen. Mike Johnston said, "It's time to act" and that school funding doesn't need to be studied further. He urged a statewide ballot measure that would allow the state to retain and spend all revenues in excess of the annual

cap now set by the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR).

Other Democrats were more cautious about next steps.

Referring to the defeat of past education funding ballot proposals, Lynne cautioned, "We cannot fail one more time." She urged further study, particularly by the Education Leadership Council, an advisory panel that was revived recently by Gov. John Hickenlooper. Lynne was to be a chair of the panel until she announced her run for governor.

Businessman Noel Ginsburg said conflicting constitutional provisions such as TABOR and the Gallagher Amendment need to be resolved before school funding can be addressed. Doing that will require building political coalitions and public trust across the state, he said. Even if there's constitutional reform, education will need additional revenue, Ginsburg added.

Former State Treasurer Cary Kennedy promised, "I will lead on this" but didn't offer a specific program to improve school funding. She repeatedly mentioned her involvement in creating Amendment 23, Referendum C and the Building Excellent Schools Today program as examples of her qualifications on the issue. "I am the only candidate in this race that has successfully taken on TABOR," she said, referring to the passage of Amendment 23.

Congressman Jared Polis was unable to attend the forum but did greet conference attendees with a brief video.

In contrast, the tone was different when the Republicans answered the same question. Most of the five GOP candidates took a less pessimistic view and suggested school funding can be boosted through efficiencies and savings elsewhere in state government, especially in Medicaid.

"I'm not sure we're at a crisis level for funding," said Arapahoe County District Attorney George Brauchler. He added that there could be a crisis if the state doesn't address the funding challenges of Medicaid and the Public Employees' Retirement Association. If those are fixed, "We are well on our way to a better-funded school system," Brauchler stated.

Steve Barlock said his top issue is reforming PERA and that once "we take care of PERA we'll have more funding available." He made a general reference to using lottery revenues to help fund the retirement system.

Former legislator Victor Mitchell said, "I believe the [education] system should be reformed before you fully fund it... We have to think about major reforms." He didn't go into detail about what those should be, although he mentioned the need for more career and vocational education, a more flexible teacher licensing system, teacher tenure reform and higher starting salaries for teachers.

Mitchell said once education is "reformed", plenty of revenue should be available from efficiencies in other state departments, especially from Medicaid and the Department of Transportation.

Former investment banker Doug Robinson said, "I do not believe there is the appetite for a tax increase... but we need to address the negative factor." He suggested cutting education bureaucracy and red tape, making better use of technology and increased business support as ways to improve K-12 finances. He also said the state needs to cut Medicaid spending.

Only former Parker Mayor Greg Lopez agreed that education funding faces a crisis and promised he would travel to all 64 counties in a campaign to educate the public on the state's constitutional conflicts and then create a legislative task force to suggest how to "amend or eliminate" problematic provisions.

In addition to short opening and closing statements, the candidates briefly answered questions about school choice and helping rural districts.

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## Laying the Foundation

At its core, CASB is only as strong as the member school boards who govern the 178 school districts across Colorado. One key element where the voice of CASB members is especially important is in the legislative arena. There are few areas more heavily impacted by state and federal regulations than education. CASB is unique in that each member school district has the ability help

steer the course the organization will follow when lobbying elected officials.

The 2017 Delegate Assembly took on many important topics when it convened on Saturday, October 14, 2017. In all, the delegates debated 24 resolutions that were submitted by the CASB membership. Resolutions covered topics from funding to school safety.

Of the 24 resolutions that were submitted, 17 were approved, three failed and four were withdrawn. In addition, the delegates approved nine standing resolutions to guide the advocacy work of CASB. The complete list of adopted resolutions and the standing resolutions will be available on the CASB website ([casb.org](http://casb.org)) the first week of November.

In the next several weeks many legislators will be unveiling the bills they hope to pass during the 2018 session of general assembly. The guidance provided by the Delegate Assembly will help determine the positions and strategies of how best to respond to a particular bill.

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## A Trip to the Hill



To say that the trials and tribulations of our elected officials in Washington D.C. has been in the news a lot lately is an understatement. Not many folks can remember a time of such rancor in the capitol. So, the question for school board members becomes how best to understand it all? One way is to see it up close and personal during the CASB Federal Relations Network's annual trip to Washington D.C. – a trip that is not limited to FRN members. CASB encourages board members to join us at the Nation's Capital.

The 2017 National School Board Association (NSBA) Advocacy Institute will be held in Washington D.C. from Sunday, February 4 to Tuesday, February 6, 2018. If the starting date rings a bell that is because it is Super Bowl Sunday. Considering the current play of the Broncos, you

may want an alternative to the big game. [Registration and agenda information is available here.](#)

In Colorado, we are lucky to have a very solid group of Representatives and Senators working for all of us. The Colorado congressional delegation always makes time to discuss education issues with CASB members during our trip. It is fascinating to peek "behind the curtain" and view how the nation's work is carried out. We hope to see you there!

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## CASB and friends successful in seeking much-needed revisions to State Board rules

CASB and other education organizations have been especially busy as of late, responding to the State Board of Education's rulemaking to implement in 2017 legislation. One set of rules pertained to the complaint process governing a school's use of restraint on a student. The other set of rules addressed changes to the READ Act and the State Board's proposed new reporting requirements for districts.

Pursuant to CASB's typical practice, CASB's legal team reviewed the proposed rules and then reached out to other interested groups for their expertise and support on the written responses submitted to the State Board. As a result of those conversations, CASE, the Colorado BOCES Association, the Colorado Rural Schools Alliance and the Consortium of Directors of Special Education joined CASB on the restraint rules letter to the State Board. CASE and the Colorado Rural Schools Alliance joined CASB on the READ Act rules letter.

At the beginning of this month, CASB's legal and policy counsel, Kathy Shannon, testified before the State Board in support of the requests made in both letters. Despite some pushback from a couple of State Board members, almost all of the requested changes were approved by the State Board in the rules.

*CASB publishes the School Board Advocate once a month when the Colorado General Assembly is not in session, except for July and December. During session, it is published twice a month. If you have suggestions or feedback about the School Board Advocate, please contact Matt Cook, director of public policy and advocacy. Matt can be reached at 303-832-1000.*

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