

# Member News

SPRING 2006



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## Letter from the President

Since publication of our last newsletter, NQE has been busy traveling the state and meeting with NV school administrators, trustees and legislators concerning education. Please take a moment to read the "state" news segment of this newsletter.

On a different note, Carolyn Edwards, one of the founding members of NQE has resigned from the Board to pursue her candidacy for Clark County school board trustee representing District F. Carolyn has devoted many hours to NQE and she will be sorely missed. However, we wish her well in her candidacy efforts and know that whatever Carolyn pursues, she brings with her many talents and energy.

Have a relaxing and healthy summer!

Donna Hoffman-Anspach  
President

## NQE Opposes TASC for Nevada

NQE joined the NV State Education Association, NV AFL-CIO, and NV Alliance of Retired Americans in a lawsuit to stop the circulation of a Tax and Spending Control (TASC) petition promoted by gubernatorial candidate, Bob Beers. The petition currently being circulated requires 120,000 signatures by June 20<sup>th</sup> in order for such a proposal to be placed on the ballot. Beers' proposal locks into our state constitution severe limits on state and local spending on public services that could lead to harmful reductions in "vital services" such as education, fire and police protection, healthcare and transportation. The proposal is a clear step in the wrong direction for our schools. Our education system needs help, and this measure would prevent adequate school funding for more classrooms and teachers to keep up with our continual growth.

You can help stop this deceptive proposal by encouraging your friends and neighbors to look into the facts before putting their names on the petition; in other words, "Decline to Sign". To find out more info about TASC, call the hotline number: 702-408-7801

## State News

**Washoe County** - In January, NQE Board members were invited to Reno to make a presentation to the NV Association of School Boards. This was a good opportunity for us to describe some of the work NQE does to those trustees in other parts of NV. While in Reno, we also had a chance to sit down with Mr. Paul Dugan, Superintendent of Washoe County School District. Mr. Dugan is also faced with a growing population in his district and not enough resources to keep up with the demand.

Representative Debbie Smith (Washoe) also met with us. She is the Vice-Chair of the NV State Legislative Committee on Education. During our visit, she invited NQE to attend the March 27<sup>th</sup> Parental Summit Meeting in Reno. The meeting was sponsored by NV PTA and NV Department of Education. This was the first statewide meeting on parental involvement in Nevada and it will hopefully become a tradition. It was well attended with parents, administrators, trustees, legislators and a welcome speech by Governor Kenny Guinn.

**Nye County** - In February, NQE visited our neighboring county of Nye. Dr. William "Rob" Roberts took time out from his busy schedule to share some information about his unique school district with us. Because Nye is so large (18,400 sq. mi), Dr. Roberts must spend his time between 2 offices - one in Pahrump (South) and the other in Tonopah (North). For the 05-06 school year, Nye has a total enrollment of 6,223 students in 18 schools. NQE is again amazed at what NV school superintendents do in their districts with so little.

**Douglas County** – Carol Lark, former elementary school principal and current Clark County assistant superintendent in the Southeast Region, signed a three year contract as the superintendent of Douglas County School District to succeed Mr. John Soderman, who is retiring. Douglas County is the state’s fifth largest school district encompassing Garnerville, Minden and South Lake Tahoe. The county has a student population of 7,000 with 13 schools. Ten of the schools met all federal No Child Left Behind standards last school year.

**Clark County** – Congratulations to Dr. Walt Rulffes, who was appointed as the 10<sup>th</sup> superintendent of Schools for Clark County on January 26<sup>th</sup> by the CCSD Board of Trustees. Dr. Rulffes was given an 18 month contract. He brings 30 years of public education experience to the position for the 5<sup>th</sup> largest US school district. As a past chief financial officer in Clark County, he has played a vital role in the 1998 bond measure used to build more than 100 schools over the past 10 years.

## Legislative Issues

**ACR10** – Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR10) directs the Legislative Commission to conduct an interim study on the adequacy of the system of school finance in Nevada. The Constitution of the State requires the Legislature to provide for the support and maintenance of the common schools by direct legislative appropriation from the General Fund.

According to “Quality Counts 2004”, an annual report published by Education Week, Nevada is among the best at equalizing the distribution of state and local revenue in support of public elementary and secondary schools. The authors of the report also determined that the adequacy of education in Nevada ranks among the very lowest in the US. Only 1.9 percent of Nevada’s students attend school in a district that receives funding that is currently at or above the national average spending level per student.

ACR10 directed the Legislative Commission to appoint a committee consisting of 3 members of the Assembly and 3 members of the Senate to study school finance in Nevada. As required, the committee entered into a contract with a qualified, independent, nationally recognized consultant to assist them in its study.

Augenblick, Palaich & Associates, Inc. has been hired as the consulting firm to perform the study. It is important that we utilize every opportunity available to communicate our concern with inadequate funding issues to the committee and consulting firm. Due to funding constraints, the firm will not study all 17 districts at this time. Clark County, the largest district, is being evaluated first.

NQE’s primary concerns relate directly to the child in the classroom. While realizing that increased funding across the board is necessary, our commitment to students remains in the forefront. NQE will encourage additional funding for our ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS, CLASS SIZE REDUCTION K-12, FULL DAY K AT ALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, PRE K PROGRAMS IN AREAS OF NEED AND ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS THAT ARE NOT ADEQUATELY FUNDED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BUT SUBSIDIZED BY INDIVIDUAL DISTRICTS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE NECESSARY SERVICES.

It is vitally important for parents and community members to provide input from an “in the trenches with students” perspective. A number of well-funded special interests groups will lobby heavily for other issues that don’t necessarily focus on the students in the classroom. NQE will monitor the progress of ACR10 and will be calling upon our members and “legislative alert” email list participants to communicate needs for our children.

**SB1 Deconsolidation** — SB1 from the 2005 special session ordered a plan to deconsolidate the Clark County School District. Although the Legislative Committee on Education has met, a consultant has not been retained at this point in time. NQE is closely monitoring the progression and will keep our membership informed.

## Email Alert List

In preparation for the Nevada 2007 Legislative Session, NQE is working to expand our “legislative alert” email list in order to increase communication. Last session we were very successful with alerting our members to important education legislation. On one occasion, legislators received hundreds of emails generated from our alert.

While most parents and those in the community do not have the time or ability to travel to Carson City and become directly involved, they can be instrumental in making change by simply sending email communication to legislators.

To be added to our important “legislative alert” system, please send us an email with your contact information to [mm@nevadansforqualityeducation.org](mailto:mm@nevadansforqualityeducation.org). Please include your name, email address, phone number and county of residence. Share this opportunity with your friends and neighbors. There is power in numbers.