

EXECUTIVE POSITION PROFILE




Chief Advocacy Officer



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I. Position Description

Scope of the Position

The **Chief Advocacy Officer** of the National School Boards Association provides leadership and oversight to direct the association's interest in Congress and federal agencies through staff lobbying, field activities, the media, and coalitions. This position provides leadership and oversight to Center for Public Education to provide high profile and functional research reports on education and school governance. The Chief Advocacy Officer participates in general management of the association as a member of the senior staff.

The Chief Advocacy Officer reports to the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, and has three direct reports among a total team of 13.

Experience & Qualifications

- Juris Doctor or master's degree in education, public administration, or a related field, or an equivalent combination of education and experience.
- Significant experience lobbying on Capitol Hill or in an experienced senior-level Congressional staff position.
- Experience working on federal/national education issues.
- Experience supervising professional and independently operating staff.
- Knowledge of Capitol Hill/agency, education, and related federal legislation and regulations.
- Knowledge of nonprofit business operations, as well as school boards and local school district operations.
- Excellent communication and leadership skills.
- Experience in a related leadership position with supervisory responsibilities is preferred.
- Successful at team building as an ongoing process.
- A charismatic, dynamic person who can communicate with a broad range of people, from members to government representatives.
- An engaging, proven public speaker with strong written communication skills.

- A good listener.
- A friendly, approachable, positive individual with good interpersonal skills.
- The ability to find creative solutions to complex situations.
- A sense of urgency and high energy.
- An outstanding ability to communicate with numerous and varied constituents.
- Strong organizational and time-management skills to meet deadlines.

Key Responsibilities

- Determines and advocates NSBA's key advocacy priorities with Congressional offices, political appointees, and senior Executive Branch officials.
- Oversees operation of the separate (c)(4) lobbying organization, the National School Board Action Center, including reporting to NSBAC's Board of Directors, fiscal management, IRS compliance, and execution of the lobbying service agreement with NSBA.
- Oversees NSBA's Center for Public Education, including grant acquisition, priorities, and substantive work product.
- Oversees management of Federal Advocacy and Public Policy section, including budget, personnel decisions, resource deployment, and legal requirements.
- Develops and coordinates major strategies on key issues involving federal legislation, and regulation, public policy, and key state-based issues.
- Appears before NSBA's governance and constituency groups as on key points relating to their advocacy interests.
- Works with Executive Director and other key personnel to address broad association-wide programs and issues.
- Directs constituent-based program strategies and content development relating to state association services including state-based legislation, and nationally based services for state associations and other NSBA constituent groups.

- Communicates as an NSBA spokesperson with the national media and other associations on NSBA's key advocacy points.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

Personal & Professional Qualities

The successful candidate will possess a wide range of personality traits, work habits, and communication and social skills necessary to work effectively within the government advocacy environment. This person will have both personal and professional integrity, strong communication skills, and a professional appearance and presentation. In addition, the qualified candidate will have a strong desire to succeed in a challenging environment.

Other proficiencies and best practices for the highest performers include:

- **Integrity & compliance:** Can be relied on to act ethically, to safeguard confidential information, and to adhere to the NSBA mission and core values.
- **Leadership:** Ability to build a sense of shared purpose and commitment in others.
- **Strategic vision & thinking:** Ability to position the conferences and events for the future, looking beyond the present situation to conceptualize key trends and identify changing market demands.
- **Managing performance:** Assists others in setting goals that are challenging and aligned with the

broader organization goals; monitors and evaluates others' performance; and provides feedback and reinforces behavior.

- **Coaching & developing others:** Guides others in performing effectively and provides others with development opportunities.
- **Recruitment & retention:** Attracts, selects, and retains talented staff.
- **Financial skills:** Manages his or her part of NSBA's financial performance and understands key financial indicators.
- **Relationship building:** Networks outside and inside the organization and builds positive strategic relationships with key individuals and groups.
- **Creativity:** Ability to address problems and challenges, moving beyond the standard methods and solutions, and keeping NSBA ahead of the curve.
- **Customer focus:** A commitment to customer satisfaction, including anticipating needs, providing appropriate education, and developing solutions.
- **Customer service:** Knows how to present and instill a positive, can-do attitude that always reflects well on NSBA and its members.
- **Continuous learning:** Takes initiative in learning and implementing new concepts, technologies, and methods.
- **Presentation skills:** Communicates effectively with staff, peers, and the Board of Directors.

II. Organization Review

National School Boards Association (NSBA)

NSBA is a not-for-profit organization, founded in 1940, representing state associations of school boards and their more than 90,000 local school board members throughout the United States, almost all of whom are elected. These local officials govern more than 13,600 local school districts serving the nation's 50 million public school students. Association offices are located in Alexandria, VA.

With a budget of nearly \$18 Million, NSBA achieves its mission by representing the school board perspective in working with federal agencies and national organizations that affect education, providing vital information and services to state associations of school boards throughout the nation. NSBA advocates local school boards as the ultimate expression of grassroots democracy. It supports the capacity of each school board, acting on behalf of and in close concert with the people of its community, to achieve several major objectives:

- To envision the future of education in its community.
- To establish a structure and environment that allow all students to reach their maximum potential.
- To provide accountability to the community on performance in the schools.
- To serve as the key community advocate for children and youth and their public schools.

Mission, Vision & Goals

The stated mission of NSBA is: "Working with and through our state associations, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership."

NSBA achieves that mission by representing the school board perspective in working with federal government agencies and national organizations that affect education, and providing vital information and services to state associations of school boards nationwide. Further, NSBA provides and fosters



national leadership that encourages outstanding school board governance to achieve student success. NSBA has embraced five fundamental goals to help achieve its mission:

- **Member service culture and relationships** — NSBA will build effective relationships by fostering a member-service culture supporting the needs of state association members.
- **School board leadership** — NSBA will provide state associations with research, information, and other services to support local school boards in governing and leading their communities to improve student learning.
- **Advocacy** — NSBA will, in order to strengthen public education, proactively raise its profile, presence, and impact on Capitol Hill, in the courts, and nationally through legislative and legal advocacy.
- **Support for public education** — With public education as a civil right and the cornerstone of our democracy, NSBA will inspire and strengthen support for public education and the essential role of school boards.
- **Infrastructure** — NSBA will maintain a sound infrastructure that supports continuous improvement in its services and operations and generates program and activity resources to support its mission.

Governance

NSBA policy is determined by a 150-member Delegate Assembly of local school board members representing their state associations of school boards. The 25-member Board of Directors translates this policy into action. Programs and services are administered by NSBA's Executive Director and a nearly 70-person staff.

The “New NSBA”

NSBA continues to adapt as challenges facing public education and local school governance grow. A major initiative culminated in December 2012, when NSBA's Board of Directors adopted a report entitled *New NSBA: Charting the Course for the Future of the National School Boards Association*. This report provided strategic direction to the organization on how to become a “New NSBA.”

It presents an organization that employs a more assertive approach to advocacy in the legislative, legal, and public arenas in an effort to shape the debate about public education and to counter the efforts of those who endanger this vital institution. It portrays an NSBA that is a visible, influential, and effective leader in public education. The report set the direction for NSBA to offer even more powerful service to, and partnership with, state association members.



National School Boards Action Center

Reflecting the “New NSBA,” in 2012 the association also created the National School Boards Action Center (NSBAC), a 501(c)(4) not-for-profit organization (oversight of which is a key responsibility of the Chief Advocacy Officer). The Center's mission is to advocate, in coordination with NSBA, at the federal and national levels for the advancement of public education, local school board leadership, and excellence and equity in our nation's public schools.

Advocacy & Policy at NSBA

NSBA's Office of Federal Advocacy & Public Policy represents the interests of the nation's 90,000 local school board members before Congress. NSBA's priority issues include:

- Funding for public schools
- Implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act
- Enhancing local school board governance and reducing federal over-reach
- The federal funding for education
- School safety
- Teacher and principal effectiveness
- Investing in early childhood education
- Charter schools
- School vouchers
- Schools and libraries program of the Universal Service Fund (E-Rate)
- Special education (IDEA)
- Child nutrition

The Federal Relations Network & the NSBA Advocacy Institute

NSBA's Federal Relations Network (FRN) involves local school board members from every congressional district in grassroots advocacy for public education. The ultimate goal of FRN advocacy is to make public education a top priority of the federal government. FRN members are appointed by their state associations. They attend the NSBA Advocacy Institute, held annually in February in Washington, DC. Also, they remain in contact with their members of Congress year-round to discuss NSBA's and their state association's positions on key education issues.

NSBA assembles local school board advocates in order to:

- Strengthen members' public, legal, and legislative advocacy skills for their year-round advocacy efforts;
- Create concise messaging to enhance lobbying efforts;
- Create a foundation for engaging the media and the public throughout the year; and

- Take the opportunity to lobby, in an organized fashion and in force, members of Congress and key federal officials.

The Advocacy Staff

The Office of Federal Advocacy & Public Policy's Advocacy Team is composed of experienced government relations professionals who closely monitor actions on Capitol Hill, at the White House, and in the federal agencies. They serve as a resource to FRN members, helping them maximize their school district's impact on federal and national policies. Under the Chief Advocacy Officer's supervision, the Office is organized in three parts:

Federal Legislation

- **Deborah Rigsby**
Program Director, Lobbying & Federal Legislation
- **Whitney Riggs**
Senior Legislative Analyst
- **Christina Schaffer**
Program Coordinator

National Advocacy Programs

- **Amirah Salaam**
Director, National Advocacy Programs
- **Mary McKee**
Field Operations, Program Associate
- **Katherine Shek**
Program Lead, National School Boards Action Center

Center for Public Education

- **Patte Barth**
Program Director, Center for Public Education
- **Naomi Dillon**
Senior Program Associate
- **Chandi Wagner**
Research Analyst

Annual Conference & Exposition

In addition to the annual National Advocacy Institute, NSBA mounts several annual events that provide training opportunities for school board members and members of their district staff, focusing on five key areas: leadership, advocacy, technology, urban school issues, and school law. Foremost among these events is the *NSBA Annual Conference & Exposition*, the largest national

gathering of elected officials — over 5,000 board members, superintendents, and education leaders from across the country and around the globe. It offers an impressive collection of professional development opportunities, including 275 workshops, speakers, forums, and networking events, plus nearly 300 exhibitors over the course of three days in late March or early April. The 2017 conference was held in Denver.

Publications & Resources

NSBA provides its members with numerous publications and a wide spectrum of resources.

- **American School Board Journal** monthly magazine is the only national publication for school board members as well as administrators, parents, and community leaders. Each issue delivers practical information on complex issues facing educators today, including education trends, student achievement, curriculum development, and school finance.
- **NSBA Bookstore** offers a variety of books and reports a variety of books and reports on school governance and other education topics that NSBA publishes, including “The Key Work of School Boards” and “Telling Your Story.”
- **COSA eDocs Store** is the source for immediate access to school law documents from the NSBA Council of School Attorneys.
- **Legal Clips** is NSBA's source for recent developments in school law.
- **The EDifier** provides research and insights from the Center for Public Education.
- **Urban Advocate**, published six times a year, addresses the programmatic, fiscal, and governance challenges of urban public schools on behalf of its members and over 9 million students they serve.
- **School Law Publications** keep members abreast of the latest developments in school law.
- **Leadership Insider** is a newsletter for decision makers that contains in-depth articles on current and provocative policy and school law-related topics.

Annual Conference & Exposition

The NSBA staff is organized into six Offices, most including one or more discrete entities within the purview of that Office:

- Executive Director's Office
- Office of Administrative Departments
 - Business Development
 - BuyBoard
 - Conferences, Meetings, & Database Management
 - Finance & Business
 - Human Resources
 - Information Technology
 - Office Services & Property Management
 - Exhibits
- Office of Federal Advocacy & Public Policy
 - Center for Public Education
- General Counsel/Legal Advocacy & Legal Services
 - Council of School Attorneys
- Office of State Association & School Board Leadership Services
 - Educational Services & Conference Programming
 - Council of Urban Boards of Education
- Office of Public Advocacy & Communications
 - Communication & Online Strategies
 - Creative Services
 - Editorial Services & Publications
 - Marketing

Staff Leadership

- **Thomas Gentzel**
Executive Director and CEO
- **Rory Davenport**
Chief Communications Officer
- **Heather Dean**
Chief Operating Officer
- **Francisco Negrón Jr.**
Chief Legal Officer
- **Vacant**
Chief Advocacy Officer
- **Ron Skinner**
Chief Member Services Officer

- **Naomi Gittins**
Managing Director, Legal Advocacy
- **Patte Barth**
Program Director, Center for Public Education
- **Tammy Carter**
Senior Staff Attorney
- **Valarie Carty**
Program Director, State Association Services
- **Leza Conliffe**
Senior Staff Attorney
- **Ann Flynn**
Program Director, Education Innovation
- **David Garofalo**
Director, Marketing
- **Monique Porter**
Controller
- **John Reeb**
Managing Director, Operations
- **Deborah Rigsby**
Program Director, Federal Legislation
- **Sonja Trainor**
Program Director, Council of School Attorneys
- **Kathleen Vail**
Program Director, Editorial Services & Publications
- **Kanisha Williams-Jones**
Managing Director, Member and Leadership Services

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Weatogu, CT (Northeast Region)

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- **Dr. Emma Turner**
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Board Members
Spring Valley, CA
- **Steve Corona**
Chair, National Hispanic Council of
School Board Members
Fort Wayne, IN

EX OFFICIO NON-VOTING DIRECTORS

- **Thomas J. Gentzel**
Executive Director and CEO, NSBA
- **Shawn Hime**
Chair, Organization of State Association
Executive Directors
Oklahoma City, OK
- **Pilar Sokol**
Chair, Council of School Attorneys
Latham, NY.

NSBA Headquarters

The NSBA headquarters is located at 1680 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA, a quarter-mile walk from the King Street Metro Station on the Blue and Yellow lines, and a few minutes drive from the Capital Beltway (I-495).

Web Presence

NSBA, and the not-for-profit National School Boards Action Center (NSBAC), can be found online at:

www.nsba.org | www.nsbac.org

The organization has an additional online presence on LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, and Google Plus.

III. About Vetted Solutions

Vetted Solutions is a Washington, D.C. based executive search firm specializing in association, nonprofit, and hospitality/destination marketing community recruiting and consulting. We focus on senior staff and CEO positions.

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