



T.I.G.E.R. Newsletter

Tennessee Initiative for Gifted Education Reform

Volume 1, Issue 8 • April 22, 2002 • <http://giftedtn.go.to>

Last minute lobby effort secures support for federal gifted funding!

The only federal program supporting gifted education – the Javits Act – was cut from the president's 2003 federal budget proposal. The Javits program funds a national research center for gifted education and also awards major grants to states and school districts. Senator Grassley from Iowa and Representative Gallegly from California started a campaign to save the Javits program, asking for \$25 million in funding, which is more than twice the current funding.

Three weeks ago, no one from the Tennessee Congressional Delegation had signed the Grassley/Gallegly funding letter. Parents, teachers, and others from across Tennessee urgently called and faxed their congressmen in Washington, trying to beat an April 19 deadline for appropriations requests. As a result, six members of the Tennessee Congressional Delegation signed on: Van Hilleary (TN-4); Bob Clement (TN-5); Bart Gordon (TN-6); Ed Bryant (TN-7); John Tanner (TN-8); Harold Ford, Jr. (TN-9).

Officers from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) are very impressed with Tennessee's grassroots effort to secure co-signers in the last two weeks. In all, 16 senators and 51 representatives supported the funding request. The complete list is on the legislative update page on the NAGC Web site: <http://www.nagc.org/Policy/update.htm>

This is a good opportunity to thank our congressmen who supported increased Javits funding for gifted education. For legislative contact information, see:

http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW_by_State.htm

Governor's Schools officially closed after \$15M cut to education budget

The Tennessee Governor's Schools for the Gifted and Talented were officially eliminated last week. Earlier this year, the governor cut the \$750K earmarked for the schools, making it very likely that the schools would be suspended. Last week the department of education made it official and shut down the schools. A department spokesperson stated that \$60M of additional revenue would be needed before the schools could be restored.

There were seven Governor's Schools scattered across the state with programs in the Humanities, Math and Science, Arts, International Studies, Tennessee Heritage, Teaching, Manufacturing, and Hospitality and Tourism. More than 800 high school students participated each summer. According to a past Governor School director, most students served by the program probably could not afford more expensive privately run programs, such as Vanderbilt PTY and Duke TIP.

Joel Walton, who oversees the Governor's Schools at the department of education, said there is still a glimmer of hope. He advised TIGER that parents should contact their state legislators and keep the issue before them. If additional funds become available, legislators need to know that the Governor's Schools are highly valued by the citizens of Tennessee. However, there is no chance the schools will open this year.

For legislative contact information, see:

<http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/senate/map/senmap.htm>

<http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/house/map/housemap2.htm>

“Rally for Tennessee's Future” – May 1 at 6:30 PM in Nashville

There will be a major rally in Nashville on May 1 supporting increased funding for public education in Tennessee. Tennessee currently ranks 50th in per-student education funding. TIGER will attend the rally as part of a large coalition of education interests groups. Other members of the coalition include the Tennessee School Boards Association, the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, and the Tennessee Education Association. The coalition does not endorse any particular legislation.

The funding crisis is of particular interest to parents and teachers of gifted students since gifted programs are often the first to be cut. Only by supporting the interests of all students can TIGER hope to help gifted students.

Come to the rally at War Memorial (Legislative) Plaza, Nashville, 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 1, 2002 to support funding for public schools. Realizing that this is not much notice, we do hope that all of you will be able to participate in the rally. We will have a banner identifying our group. The TIGER email list will be receiving more detailed information in the next few days.

TIGER is a statewide, non-profit organization of parents and other advocates working to strengthen educational opportunities for academically gifted children in Tennessee.