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TEA LEGISLATIVE REPORT | FEBRUARY 1, 2016 | VOL. 2, ISSUE 2

The future of Tennessee Public Schools up for a vote

VOUCHER FIGHT!

*BILL NARROWLY PASSES 11-10 IN HOUSE COMMITTEE
FLOOR VOTE TO COME POSSIBLY FEBRUARY 4*

CRITICAL FOR ALL TO TELL THEIR STATE
REPRESENTATIVE **NO** ON VOUCHERS

TEA ATTACKED!

Bill targeting teachers' voices flies through Senate

Bipartisan opposition after strange committee and floor sessions, fight moves to the House

You can tell how effective you are by the enemies you make and the attacks they launch against you.

Americans for Prosperity, Students First and other deep-pocketed out-of-state special interest groups have launched an all-out attack on teachers' right to belong to their association and protect their public schools.

Sen. Todd Gardenhire (R-Chattanooga) shocked statehouse observers last week when he rewrote a bill regulating bicycle helmets into one that targets the ability of teachers to pay their membership through payroll deduction.

Also one of the sponsors of the voucher legislation, Gardenhire claims the dues deduction system that has

worked for decades is "unfair" to other organizations, one of which claims to represent teachers but lobbied to repeal the collective bargaining rights.

As if those alliances weren't obvious enough, Gardenhire admitted to the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* that TEA's political activity and effectiveness factored into his bill.

"That was certainly part of it," Gardenhire was quoted as saying.

Dubbed "Fair Access to Collection of Teacher Support Act," Gardenhire's legislation would bar employee dues check-offs by local school systems "for a professional employee organization, if

TEA UNDER ATTACK
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Voucher bill threatens all Tennessee districts, everyone needs to get involved in the fight

The private school voucher bill (HB 1049) barely passed the House Finance committee with a vote of 11-10. It was a razor's edge vote in committee, showing the bill does not have strong support.

So how did we get here?

TEA has been battling out-of-state interest groups over private school vouchers for three years. These groups have more money and more paid lobbyists than we do, but they don't have the power of our membership. For three consecutive years, we have pushed back

against these groups and won.

In previous years, we have been able to bottle up vouchers in the House Finance sub-committee. This year, voucher advocates took advantage of two of our key "no" votes being absent from the sub-

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THE STRONGEST VOICE FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

Vouchers are unwanted and unneeded in Tennessee

By TEA President Barbara Gray



I've been thinking recently about the National Do Not Call Registry that gets rid of unwanted harassment when solicitors just won't take a hint that you are not interested. It seems like it may be time for a similar program to get rid of the out-of-state groups that keep trying to force private school vouchers into Tennessee. Proposed voucher bills have been defeated three years in a row now in the Tennessee General Assembly. To me, this shows that vouchers are unwanted and unneeded in Tennessee.

The fact that the bill gives taxpayer dollars to private entities should be a huge red flag, but even worse is the proposal's intent to leave many students behind. The bill allows private entities to decide which students are admitted with the "choice and opportunity" voucher, when in fact all students in Tennessee deserve great public schools.

The Tennessee Constitution requires the General Assembly to "provide for the maintenance, support and eligibility

standards of a system of free public schools," yet many legislators' priority seems to be the maintenance and support of private enterprise. Tennessee already ranks 46th in the nation for government funding per student. Instead of giving money to vouchers and other privatization schemes, why not provide adequate funding for our public schools as required in our state constitution?

Public school teachers are working miracles in their classrooms every day. Tennessee public schools have among the top graduation rates in the country and, at the same time, one of the lowest rates of funding per student. Imagine what educators could do with the proper resources and support from our elected officials.

A critical flaw in this legislation is the lack of proper oversight. Tennessee's education

standards and measures for accountability do not apply to private programs. This includes public disclosure of teacher licensure, budgets and student achievement. Evidence from other states shows school voucher programs waste taxpayer money by supporting substandard and unaccredited programs.

No credible study or research has ever proven the effectiveness of school vouchers or demonstrated any sustained improvement in student achievement over public schools. In the more than 50 years since school vouchers were first proposed, the concept remains controversial, unproven and unpopular.

The latest proposal is even worse than in recent years. The current proposal headed to the House for a floor vote opens vouchers up to all low-income students in a county with just one school in the bottom 5 percent. It is not about poorly performing schools or providing more options for families zoned in those schools. It is probable that taxpayers will pay for a student to leave an effective public school and go to a poorly performing private school.

Tennessee students cannot afford to be guinea pigs for yet another unproven, ineffective 'reform' scheme. Tennessee needs to keep its tax dollars where they belong – in our public schools.

Tennessee's children deserve great public schools. Private school vouchers are not the answer.

We will not be silenced, and we will not back down

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder



Corporate education reformers are easy to spot if you let them talk long enough.

The same is true with their friends in the legislature. They hide behind a flimsy facade of save-the-children rhetoric, but their true motivations – collecting thousands of dollars in SuperPAC campaign contributions and a need to silence those who stand in their way – are clear to those who truly value public education.

The Payroll Dues Deduction bill (SB 151/HB 294), which quickly passed the Senate last week and is now scheduled for the House Education committee this week, is a perfect example of some legislators trying to silence your voice. Sponsored by Sen. Todd Gardenhire (R-Chattanooga), the bill directly attacks TEA members and the ability of educators to be involved in the political process.

The bill originally targeted bicycle helmet regulation, but was quickly rewritten in the Senate Education Committee to delete its original intent and focus squarely on attacking TEA's ability to collect member dues through payroll deduction. No other organization in the state fits the narrow description

in Gardenhire's bill. The anti-TEA bill is sponsored in the House by Rep. Billy Spivey (R-Lewisburg).

While we certainly need to take this attack on our association seriously, we also need to stop for a moment and appreciate why they felt the need to file this legislation. TEA has become a force to be reckoned with not only in the halls of the legislature, but on Election Day.

TEA has proven in recent years that while we don't have the deep pockets of the out-of-state privatizers, we do have the power of educators' collective voice. We are a passionate, engaged group that will show up to fight for the students and profession that we love.

Many TEA members have voluntarily chosen to keep payroll deduction, and that choice should not be summarily banned. The bill has a preamble that is clearly wrong on the facts, as Fiscal Review and others have pointed out.

The best way to know that your organization is effective is when your big opponents start to attack.

As you talk to your representative, you may want to include some of the points below to counter the many fallacies in Gardenhire's anti-educator legislation, including:

* Joining any professional association is voluntary for teachers.

* Having dues paid from payroll deduction is a teacher's choice.

* Contributing to a PAC is voluntary for members of TEA. Membership does not require PAC contributions.

* No professional teachers' organization in Tennessee is denied payroll deduction by LEAs.

* As outlined in the fiscal note, payroll dues deduction does not cost tax dollars.

* Teachers use payroll deduction for a variety of benefits and purposes, including supplemental insurance, retirement accounts, and charity. TEA dues are no different.

* Teacher payroll deduction payments going to corporations do not stop their political activity under the bill.

* PECCA (collaborative conferencing) was granted to teachers by the General Assembly in 2011. The law prohibits any organization or group with interfering with a teacher choosing their representation. TEA fully supports this aspect of the law and does not interfere with representation.

Please contact your representative and urge him or her to oppose this petty and misleading bill.

Research shows: TVAAS is wrong for teacher evaluation

A new state assessment creates a lot of uncertainty for students and teachers. In TNReady's first year, scores for the new test will not affect student grades. TEA is pushing to make sure teachers are granted the same leniency.

TVAAS has always been unpredictable and unreliable as an indicator of teacher performance, but transitioning to a new test presents a new set of problems.

TEA member Rep. David Byrd has sponsored legislation that will implement a two-year waiver on the use of TVAAS estimates in teacher evaluations. This would allow the state to get a better handle on how the new test will impact the TVAAS formula. It would also allow time to discuss the proper use of TVAAS.

Specific to TNReady, researchers have found that when the method of testing changes, value-added outcomes change as well.

A study by scholars at the RAND Institute found results suggesting that conclusions about individual teachers' performance based on value-added models can be sensitive to the ways in which student achievement is measured.

In other words, when you change the type of test you use to assess student achievement, you create reliability problems in any value-added formula. This year's TVAAS scores will be completely unreliable.

Even in the best years, TVAAS is an uncertain indicator of teacher performance. Now, with a new test, it's only fair to waive the use of TVAAS until we have more and better information. In the meantime, we should be having a discussion about the best ways to evaluate teachers – and acknowledge that our educators are professionals, not data points that can be reduced to a number on a 1-5 scale generated by a secret formula.

Teachers College Record: TVAAS is not a fair arbiter of teacher performance. ELA teachers and teachers in 6th and 7th grades receive lower TVAAS scores than their peers. This unexplained bias renders TVAAS unreliable.

A 2004 study found: "...when VAM is used to estimate individual teacher effects and to rank teachers, these estimates are contaminated by effects that are properly attributed to schools, not teachers." That is, scores assigned to teachers are not reliable indicators of actual performance.

A researcher at the University of Minnesota: "using VAM to reward (or punish) teachers is inappropriate because the results are not reliable over time -- a high performing teacher according to VAM in one year may be a lower performing teacher the next."

Goldhaber & Hansen: "Much of a teacher's performance varies over time due to unobservable factors such as effort, motivation, and class chemistry that are not easily captured through VAM."



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Carolyn Crowder; ASST. EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS: Terrance Gibson; Steve McCloud; Jim Wrye; TECHNOLOGY & BUILDING



Allow tenure for a 3

TEA is proposing legislation this session that would put the power and decision-making on tenure back where it belongs - with the local school board and director. The proposal (HB 1794) gives local boards of education and directors of schools the freedom to decide for themselves if a teacher who earns a three on his evaluation should be eligible for tenure.

If passed, local leaders would no longer have to automatically pass over some teachers just because of their evaluation score. This bill, sponsored in the House by TEA member Rep. David Byrd, will free local school leaders to trust their eyes, instead of flawed test data. If a teacher's observation scores show that she is in fact a "rock solid" teacher, she would be eligible for tenure under TEA's proposal.

"As an administrator, I know I want to keep all of my 'rock solid' teachers around and I want them to have the rights and protections afforded to them through tenure," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "It is long past time for the state to get on board with rewarding great teachers."

It is time for Tennessee to allow its districts to reward great teaching. It is time for "rock solid" teachers to receive the benefits and protections that come with tenure which allows them to do their very best for Tennessee students.

Please contact your legislators to ask them to reward our hard-working teachers and give local leaders the authority to grant tenure to those "rock solid" educators.

Any increase in salary funds needs to get into paychecks

TEA's aggressive lobbying of a much-needed teacher pay raise has apparently landed on some very important ears. Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey is now supporting a teacher pay raise, and to make sure it gets into teachers' pockets, according to media reports.

TEA has been calling on the governor to fulfill his promise to make Tennessee the fastest-improving state in terms of teacher pay by putting a 6 percent teacher pay raise in this year's budget.

Last year, the governor took an important step toward his stated goal by including a 4 percent raise for teachers in the 2015 budget.

The average Tennessee teacher only ended up with about 2 percent raise because of recent state policy changes including gutting the State Minimum Salary Schedule. Many teachers had no raise at all and disparity in teacher salaries is growing.

When taking into account health insurance and other benefits, some rural teachers take home pay is 56 percent less than teachers in nearby urban and suburban districts. Teachers across the state hope every penny in this year's raise actually reaches their paychecks.

"After TEA called for a 6 percent pay raise for educators in December 2014, the governor included a 4 percent salary increase for teachers in his 2015-16 budget, but there were no safeguards to ensure that 4 percent got into teachers' paychecks," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "When you factor in rising insurance premiums, some Tennessee teachers' salaries are worth less now than they were when Haslam took office. We need to make sure funds get to paychecks."

Sponsors of Special Ed vouchers already back for expansion

They said it would be a small program. They said there would be clear accountability. They said it was designed to help students AND save school districts money. They said they would start small and then grow if the program worked.

They lied.

State Sen. Dolores Gresham and State Rep. Debra Moody sponsored legislation last year to create a specialized voucher program for students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

The program the two pitched would be limited and only open to students currently enrolled in a Tennessee public school. Legislators could monitor the program and see how it was working before deciding whether to expand it. That's important, because similar programs in Arizona and Florida have been susceptible to fraud.

Now, however, Moody and Gresham are back. Back with a bill that would expand the IEP voucher bill to include any student at any school, including homeschoolers.

We have only to look to Florida to see what could go wrong. A voucher program in that state, targeted at students with special needs, quickly grew to a nearly \$150 million a year transfer of funds to private schools and dubious contractors. The program doubled in size in a matter of five years, with fraud and lack of accountability rampant.

TEA is gearing up for another fight.

**WHEN BARBARA CALLS,
STAY ON THE PHONE.
WE'LL CONNECT YOU TO
YOUR LEGISLATOR.**

**TEA's "pass through" automated
call system is the quickest way
to contact your legislator.**

An automated call with President Gray's voice is coming to your home phone. Stay on the line and the call *automatically* connects to the office of your legislator. **LEAVE A MESSAGE** on your lawmaker's voicemail, tell them who you are, that you live in the district and you strongly oppose vouchers. If you want,

leave your contact information and ask your lawmaker to call you back. **EVERY CALL MAKES A DIFFERENCE!**



TELL YOUR
LEGISLATOR
TO VOTE
NO
ON VOUCHERS

They may already be a "no," so be polite.

If you don't know who your current state representative is, the General Assembly website has a feature where voters put in their address and the site pulls up your current House and Senate member. Just go to the website: capitol.tn.gov and see the link "find my legislator."

It is important when you contact your legislator to let them know you are in their district, and leave a number so your legislator can call you back.

STOPPING VOUCHERS
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committee and rushed the bill through the second week of the session.

"The important thing here is that the bill's sponsor knew he had to take advantage of members being gone to get the bill out of the committee that has killed the legislation the past three years," said Jim Wrye, TEA chief lobbyist. "This means they have not increased support of vouchers, they just lucked out with two voucher opponents not at the committee meeting."

The bill then passed the full House Finance committee by the narrowest margin

possible, and again, one of our key "no" votes was absent.

We now face our biggest fight yet, as the proposed voucher bill heads to the House floor next week.

TEA's government relations team has been meeting with every representative the past couple of days and is encouraged by how the vote count is looking for the floor vote possibly next week.

"Many representatives strongly oppose the voucher legislation, but there are still several sitting on the fence," Wrye said. "To

keep our 'no' votes and pull the undecided votes to our side, every representative needs to be inundated with phone calls, emails and visits from their constituents asking them to vote against vouchers. Nothing is more powerful than hearing from folks back home."

To beat vouchers for a fourth year, you have to make your voice heard on this important issue.

Vouchers are a threat to every school in

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TEA bill to place effective, tenured teachers in the classroom if their school is consolidated or closed

Tennessee students deserve the most effective and experienced teachers in their classrooms. Unfortunately some districts are taking advantage of vague language in state law to replace experienced, tenured teachers with unqualified Teach For America recruits.

A TEA-backed bill sponsored by Sen. Steve Dickerson (R-Nashville) and Rep. Kevin Brooks (R-Cleveland) tightens up state law to ensure our students have the very best, experienced educators in their classrooms.

“Quality tenured teachers are losing their jobs because of school closings or a reduction-in-force,” said Steve McCloud, TEA manager of legal services. “The problem is when those experienced, tenured teachers are being passed over for other open positions in favor of poorly trained, unqualified Teach For America recruits. TEA has a lawsuit pending in Shelby County because of this practice.”

Effective, tenured teachers should have priority to be placed in another school, certainly before uncertified or non-licensed persons are hired. A district choosing to ignore a tenured teacher's professional rights and instead honor a contract with a private corporation that trains inexperienced college graduates for five weeks and then drops them into a classroom is unacceptable.

Sen. Dickerson was surprised to learn of this “excessing” practice going on in some districts and quickly agreed to be the bill's Senate sponsor. He agreed that our students deserve to have the most qualified teachers and signed on to help TEA tighten up the language in state law to prohibit this practice.

“This proposal has got some traction in the General Assembly,” said Jim Wrye TEA chief lobbyist. “It is hard to argue with ensuring our most effective teachers stay in the



Sen. Steve Dickerson (left) and Rep. Kevin Brooks (right) are sponsoring TEA's bill to make sure experienced, effective teachers are placed in a new classroom if their school is closed.

classroom. With the prevalence of this unfair excessing in Tennessee. I fully expect to have the full Memphis delegation – with the exception of Rep. John DeBerry – sign on as co-sponsors of the legislation.”

As introduced, the TEA bill creates preference for retaining tenured teachers over non-tenured teachers during a reduction of force, prohibits the dismissal of a tenured teacher in a reduction of force if another position is available in the system, and prohibits the hiring of a non-tenured teacher if a tenured teacher remains on the reemployment list.

The bill's House sponsor, Rep. Kevin Brooks is a long-standing member of the House Education committee and understands the importance of this legislation. Rep. Brooks will play a pivotal role in moving the bill through the House to ensure Tennessee keeps its best and brightest teachers where they belong – in our classrooms.

TFA participants placed in classrooms before effective career teachers? What is TFA?

Teach For America is a private corporation that takes college graduates who have not studied education, trains them over five weeks, and places them in classrooms for a two year commitment, often in urban neighborhoods that they are not familiar with.

The vast majority of TFA participants do not stay in teaching. TFA participants do not have a state license or certification, nor have any experience in teaching.

Districts with TFA recruits see incredibly high teacher turnover in the schools where consistency and accountability are needed most.

TEA UNDER ATTACK from page 1

any of that organization's funds are contributed in any way to another organization that engages in political activity.”

“There's no doubt teachers were targeted because of our political activity,” said Jim Wrye, TEA's chief lobbyist. “If we weren't considered a force to be reckoned with, nobody would bother to attack us in this manner.”

As it is currently written, Gardenhire's bill would eliminate payroll deduction for TEA members, which has been in place for decades.

TEA President Barbara Gray said SB 151/HB 294 is one of many attempts by out-of-state special interest groups to silence anyone who opposes efforts to take crucial funding from public schools.

“Payroll dues deduction has worked for so long with no problems, but now we're under attack because of our efforts to keep taxpayer dollars where they belong - in public schools,” Gray said. “TEA membership is just a slot on a paycheck just like United Way, the Farm Bureau or any other entity. We must fight this dangerous bill so we can continue to stand up for our schools and our communities.”

Several Tennessee senators voiced concerns and raised questions about the anti-TEA bill. One of its strongest critics was Sen. Paul Bailey (R-Sparta).

“Currently the state of Tennessee is allowing three other groups besides the TEA to do payroll deductions,” Bailey said. “The Tennessee State Employees Association, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and the Tennessee Highway Patrol are allowed to do state payroll deductions. It appears to me we are targeting only one organization. If those employees choose to have that deduction made from their payroll, they can do so.”

Sen. Ken Yager (R-Harriman) pointed out to Gardenhire that the bill was new to him and he wasn't able to study it or discuss it with the nine LEAs in his district. Yager asked Gardenhire to roll the bill so he could discuss it with his constituents, but Gardenhire declined.

“That leaves me with no choice other than opposing this resolution,” Yager said. “Since I have had experience doing local payroll, I can assure you there is a fixed number of slots for voluntary deductions. But that's the decision of the local government, and at least in the government I've worked in for the last 24 years it was never a problem. That concerns me. I do think, despite your best interest, it does target one group.”

Sen. Frank Niceley (R-Knoxville) said he has heard no complaints from his school district or the teachers and would also like a little time to study Gardenhire's resolution.

“It's like we're taking options from some of the hardest-working people we've got out here,” Niceley said. “It seems like we're getting obsessed with putting more on teachers. I don't know what the big rush is.”

Senate Minority Leader Lee Harris (D-Memphis) took issue with the bill's preamble, which suggests that one of the reasons to limit payroll deductions is because it's a subsidy from the state of Tennessee for political activity.

“I want to make sure we're all on the same page - the state of Tennessee is not subsidizing political activities by way of this direct debit,” Harris said. “Instead, these are private resources that belong to teachers, and through their private association, these teachers have decided to allocate some of these resources to their various associations which have policy operations. The point is, the state of Tennessee is not currently involved in how these private individuals spend their resources.”

Harris pointed out that the bill sponsored by Gardenhire would get the state involved in the lives of



Sen. Paul Bailey in floor debate opposing the bill targeting TEA, at right Sen. Lee Harris

private individuals.

Also of note, a legislative fiscal note fails to support Gardenhire's assertion that payroll deduction of dues is costly to taxpayers. The analyst said having fewer deductions to employee paychecks “will not significantly reduce local expenditures.” It also noted any savings would accrue to local education agencies, not the state.

Throughout the January 25 hearing, Gardenhire refused to roll the bill. SB 151 flew out of the Tennessee Senate with 21 “Ayes.” Nine senators voted to oppose the bill, including Bailey, Niceley, Yager and Yarbrough.

TEA continues to fight the bill, pointing out its many dangers. Chief among them would be teachers' inability to impact the political process, something that the out-of-state special interest groups are hoping to accomplish. We cannot afford to let them win.

Need information, services?

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District 13 – Mary Campbell, Susan Dalton, Metro Nashville, 531 Fairground Court, Nashville, TN 37211; (615)347-6578 (Campbell), (615)476-3161 (Dalton), fax: (855)299-4968 (Campbell), (855)299-5837 (Dalton); Assns: Cumberland Uni., Dept. of Higher Ed., Metro Nashville, TN School For The Blind, Lebanon, Wilson. **District 14 – Maria Uffelmann**, P.O. Box 99, Cumberland City, TN 37050; phone: (931)827-3333, fax: (855)299-4925; Assns: Austin Peay State Uni., Clarksville-Montgomery, Robertson. **District 15 – Cheryl Richardson**, P.O. Box 354, Goodlettsville, TN 37070; phone: (615)630-2601, fax: (888)519-4879; Assns: Benton, West Carroll, Central, Clarksburg, Huntington, McKenzie, Henry, Paris, Houston, Humphreys, Stewart, Cheatham, Dickson, Hickman. **District 16 – Laurie Butler**, P.O. Box 387, Henderson, TN 38340; (731)989-4860, fax: (855)299-4591; Assns: Chester, Hardeman, West TSD, Henderson, Lexington, Jackson-Madison, Jackson State Comm. College,

www.teateachers.org
www.nea.org

Civication

noun, [siv-i-kā-shen]

1. A combination of *civics* and *vacation* that promote good laws and policies for Tennessee public schools.
2. Where TEA members come to Nashville during Spring Break to lobby their legislators for schools back home.
3. A heck of a lot of fun.



TEA member Danette Stokes (above, right) of Shelby Co. brought her daughter Kennedy to Civication during her 2015 spring break.



TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder leads Civicationers and their children last spring in a cheer following a hearty breakfast at the TEA headquarters in Nashville as TEA President Barbara Gray (top right) looks on.

Member-driven Civication makes a huge difference in legislative session

it is the perfect time to plan your spring break, and there's no better way to spend a part of it than coming to Nashville to improve education policy and practice during in-person meetings with legislators.

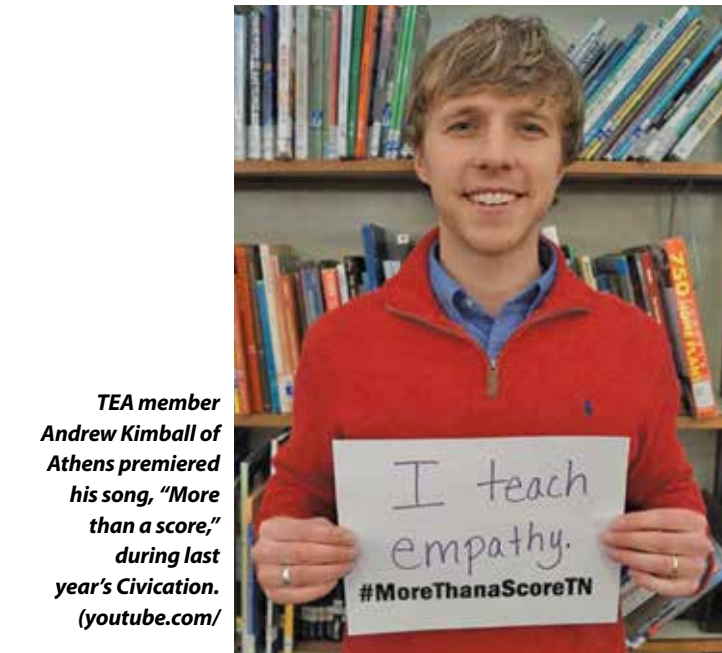
Building on the success of the last two years, teachers across Tennessee are making reservations to spend the first two days of spring break in Nashville, meet with their legislators, and have a great time. TEA pays for hotel rooms and reimburses for miles, but the camaraderie and sense of accomplishment of participating in *Civication* are priceless.

“*Civication* makes a tremendous difference,” said TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder. “Legislators take

note of the committee rooms packed with educators week after week, and it's reflected in our legislative victories”

Before crucial votes are taken, legislators take note that folks back home are paying attention to them and the bills that did – and did not – pass. Thanks to the hundreds of educators who attended *Civication*, TEA was the only organization to fight—and beat—school vouchers during the last legislative session.

“This is an election year, so it's more important than ever to tell our elected officials in person that we're counting - and counting on - their votes,” said TEA President Barbara Gray. “We'll beat vouchers for the fourth year and can defeat other bad ideas only if we present a united front.”



TEA member Andrew Kimball of Athens premiered his song, “More than a score,” during last year's Civication. (youtube.com/

www.teateachers.org/civication

VOUCHER FACTS ON HB1049



Eligibility (*for now*) is limited to low-income students, costing \$70 million in state funding.

Any system with one “bottom-five” school makes **all low-income students eligible**.

Any system that has a “bottom-five” school in the future makes **all low-income students eligible**.

Private schools are exempt from having to give state assessments to voucher students.

TEA knows once a voucher system gets started, there will be constant pressure to expand.

Currently, the voucherized systems are Shelby, Metro-Nashville, Hamilton, Jackson-Madison, and Knox.

There are almost two dozen urban and rural systems which have at least one school in the “bottom-10” list.

There is no accountability in this bill. When voucher students in Louisiana had to take state tests, it was a disaster for private schools.

There are already plans to expand the special education voucher bill from last year. This is a serious threat to public schools.

Take Action!

Email



Visit <http://bit.ly/TEAvouchers> to easily email your representative today. We have provided suggested talking points, but strongly encourage you to personalize your message. Let your representative know you are a constituent. Folks back home have the greatest impact.

Call



All TEA members will be receiving robo calls from TEA in the coming days that will pass you through to your representative's office. Please take advantage of this opportunity to speak with your legislator and ask him/her to vote NO on vouchers.

Share



Ask your family, friends, coworkers and social media network to contact their legislators, too (they can use this link to email representatives also: <http://bit.ly/TEAvouchers>). Follow TEA on Facebook and Twitter for content to share on your own social media profiles.

Everyone is getting involved. Parents, county commissioners, school board members, and supporters of public schools everywhere are contacting their representative about voting NO on vouchers. Do your part and contact your state representative today!

STOPPING VOUCHERS from page 5

every district across the state. The current proposal includes an expansion clause that would open up vouchers to all low-income students in any district with a single school in the bottom 5 percent.

“All it takes is for one school to have a bad year and drop onto that bottom 5 percent list,” said Wrye. “With a new state assessment being implemented this year and the many other factors that influence student test scores, there is just no telling what that list will look like year to year.”

It is absolutely crucial that every member of the State House of Representatives hears

from educators, parents and community members before the bill is voted on as early as Thursday on the House floor. It is up to us to stand together and ask all supporters of public education to stand with us in this fight.

“It doesn't matter whether your representative is a 'yes,' 'no,' or 'maybe' vote at this point. Every legislator needs to have full voicemails, full inboxes and full offices with the same message of 'I am your constituent and I am telling you our community says no to vouchers.'” said Wrye.

Pages 4 and 5 of this publication lay out how you can join the fight to protect public education in Tennessee.