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October 1, 2013, For Immediate Release

RUTHERFORD TEACHERS VOTE NO CONFIDENCE IN HUFFMAN

MURFREESBORO—Delegates of a recent Rutherford Education Association Representative Assembly took an unprecedented move to unanimously adopt a position of no confidence in Tennessee Commissioner of Education Kevin Huffman.

“Commissioner Huffman wants to make Tennessee the ‘fastest’ improving state in terms of education. It seems to me that if you want to go fast, you go by yourself, but if you want to go far, you go together,” said Rutherford Education Association President Emily Mitchell. “I wish Commissioner would include input from the outstanding educators we have in this great state so that students, teachers, parents and community members could go far together.”

REA’s vote comes after nearly 60 directors of schools signed a petition to Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, urging him to put the brakes on Huffman’s education initiatives. Additionally, the Metropolitan Nashville Education Association took a similar vote of no confidence in Commissioner Huffman last month.

“Mr. Huffman has made it apparent while pushing his education initiatives that he does not respect or appreciate the students and teachers of Tennessee,” said Rock Springs Middle School teacher Dr. Melinda Pope. “As an educator, I have confidence in our teachers, students and parents. I will always have the students’ best interest at heart, as do all professionals. I just ask the leaders of this state to do so as well.”

“From a hasty implementation of a new evaluation system to the abolition of a proven state salary schedule, teachers fear public education is headed in the wrong direction,” Mitchell said. “Efforts to push education reform in Tennessee have already been dubbed “education deform” as record numbers of educators retire or leave the profession. This turnover often has a negative effect on the continuity of instruction in Rutherford County because the county has to constantly retain new teachers.”

Longtime public education advocate and award-winning educator Darrick Bowman of Siegel High School said he agrees with the vote of no confidence.

“Over the past two years teachers have not been treated as professionals, and I believe that there has been an attempt by many in this state to dismantle and discredit public education,” Bowman said. “Teachers agree that we need genuine reform. But the consistent betrayal of the classroom teacher, as well as the students we teach, coupled with virtually no input from classroom teachers regarding these vast changes must stop. That begins with a no-confidence vote in Commissioner Huffman.”