



**International Technology and Engineering
Educators Association**

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Dear ITEEA Members,

I would like to share my recent experiences with you as part of being involved with the ITEEA co-sponsored Legislative Day on Capitol Hill with the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). Day one involved guest speakers from the White House, the Department of Education and panel/staff members from various congressional offices. Everyone was very supportive of the STEM initiative since the President stated he wanted 100,000 new STEM teachers. Interestingly, his DOE person was direct and spelled it out clearly that 84% of the DOE budget is distributed by formula to the states. That leaves the remaining 16% to competitive grants. He said the real play for money is through the states not the federal government. He also posed the question how do we identify our best teachers? We want to get them the support they need and we need to get the others up to speed, but until we have valid means of measuring their effectiveness they are cautious of throwing money at it. He also questioned the assessments for STEM if there are any—all good, sobering points. Math is held in high regard because we test for it as required by the AYP (annual yearly progress) of NCLB (No Child Left Behind), which will be reauthorized as ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act). Science is tested but not required under NCLB. STEM funding should show up and be available under ESEA.

The Washington environment is very tense right now, with the debt ceiling situation rapidly approaching a deadline and a new crop of freshmen congressmen sent to Washington to cut spending and control debt as a top issue—making it a difficult time to seek funding. However, I continued to speak of our funding needs as an investment and they (the staffers) were very receptive to our concerns. I was pushing primarily the ITEEA agenda of being the T & E in STEM. My comments were more specific than the generic STEM message, (which I think sometimes got lost as a convenient acronym). As much as some in the audience wanted the government to define STEM, they were quick to say that's not what you want from the government and that they would rather hear definitions from interested parties. Nobody was questioning the need for a strong education in the STEM content areas. The increasingly important role of this type of education for our country and future economic and workforce productivity was emphasized repeatedly.

The real education took place at the reception immediately after the various panel discussions. We were able to exchange notes with other like-minded individuals as we figured out ways to support each other. I feel like by emphasizing the Technology & Engineering in STEM that people perked up more hearing the words instead of the acronym. The room was filled with about 240 interested parties, including various members of ITEEA. Ryan Brown from Illinois State and current Vice-President of CTTE was there, as well as Dave Janosz from New Jersey, Einstein Fellow Terrie Rust, ITEEA Executive Director Kendall Starkweather, TSA Executive Director Rosanne White, and good friend to ITEEA Roger Bybee, and I'm sure others. Also, many elementary teachers who teach science and recognize the need for more teacher prep and professional development in this area were vocal about it. I met some of them and found out that they were using our (ITEEA) curriculum—Engineering by Design™. I was thrilled but I asked how that they got it since they weren't technology education types and they said their state was one of our consortium states so it's available to them.

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The next day we had visits with our specific representative from our home states. I met with Pennsylvania staffers from my district House of Representatives and both Senators. I felt like my comments and concerns addressing the T&E in STEM were well received and that a good contact has been made and will be nurtured. I've invited all of them to visit my program and facilities and followed up with thank you notes to each one. I can't begin to thank all of the members of ITEEA who participated in the Legislative Day. It was a refreshing to see such dedicated members taking time out of their summer to participate in the event.

I believe that this event gave us some much needed visibility to our counter parts in Science and Math. I do think a STEM education is important and we need to continue to show support, however, not at the expense of losing our identity. We still need to continue to develop our own material and show how we can be of benefit to the other groups.

Sincerely,

TOM

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