February 23, 2016

TO: NSBA Council of School Attorneys Board of Directors
   State Council Presidents
   State Association Counsel

SUBJECT: 2016 NSBA Council of School Attorneys Nominating Committee Report

The 2016 NSBA Council of School Attorneys Nominating Committee met by conference call on January 19, 2016 to select candidates to serve as officers and directors for the 2016-2017 year. The Nominating Committee consists of the three Immediate Past Chairs of COSA (Elizabeth Eynon-Kokrda, Allison Schafer, and Greg Guercio) and the Council Chair (Justin Petrarca). The Committee is chaired by Greg Guercio.

The bylaws state that the committee should “maintain a wide geographical and diverse representation on the Council Board of Directors to ensure that the professional interests and concerns of all members throughout the United States are represented.” In addition, the nominating committee considers attributes including, but not limited to: contributions to COSA at the national level, contributions to the state COSA group (whether affiliated or not) and the state school boards association, attendance at COSA events, personal commitment to COSA, commitment to the NSBA Legal Advocacy Agenda, support from the candidate’s state association, support from the nominee’s employer, leadership skills, and availability and commitment to serve as a board member/officer.

Elections for officers and directors will be held at the Council’s annual meeting at 9:40 a.m. Saturday, April 9, 2016 at the Sheraton Boston Hotel. During the meeting, the committee will thank retiring board members Séamus Boyce (IN), Danielle Haindfield (IA), and Anne Littlefield (CT), for their service to COSA. Justin Petrarca, 2015-2016 Chair, will complete his term and will serve as Immediate Past Chair. Elizabeth Eynon-Kokrda, 2012-2013 Chair, who has served as Past Chair for three years, will complete her board service and will also be recognized at the Council business meeting.

The committee would like to thank all those who submitted candidates for consideration. Below please find the recommended slate of nominees to be presented to the membership on April 9.

RECOMMENDED SLATE OF NOMINEES

Andrew M. Sanchez (NM), currently Chair-elect, becomes
COSA Chair without further vote of the membership.
**Officers**
Pilar Sokol (NY), Chair-elect  
Diane Marshall-Freeman (CA), Vice-Chair  
Phil Hartley (GA), Secretary

**Directors for First Two-year Term**
Melissa Barber (CO)  
Andrew Manna (IN)  
Debra Silk (MT)  
James Thomeczek (MO)

**Directors for Second Two-year Term**
Joy Baskin (TX)  
Kathleen Mehfoud (VA)  
W. Joseph Scholler (OH)  
Patricia J. Whitten (IL)

I am particularly thankful for the hard work and thoughtful deliberations of the Nominating Committee: Elizabeth Eynon-Kokrda, Allison Schafer and Justin Petrarca.

Sincerely,

Greg Guercio, Chair  
2016 Nominating Committee  
Attachment  
c: State Association Executive Directors  
Past COSA Chairs
Slate of Nominees
2016-2017 NSBA Council of School Attorneys

Officers

Chair
Andrew M. Sanchez
One-year term
Mr. Sanchez is a partner in the Albuquerque, New Mexico office of Cuddy & McCarthy, LLP. His practice focuses on school law and litigation defense of local school districts in New Mexico. He served on the staff of the Office of General Counsel for the Central Intelligence Agency, working primarily on employment and federal law enforcement and armed protection issues. Mr. Sanchez has represented school districts before the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the New Mexico Human Rights Commission/Human Rights Bureau on employment matters. He received his law degree from George Washington University Law School and is currently an adjunct professor at New Mexico State University. His firm organizes, in conjunction with the New Mexico School Boards Association, New Mexico’s annual school law seminar each June.

Chair-elect
Pilar Sokol
One year term
Ms. Sokol is deputy general counsel to the New York State School Boards Association in Latham, New York, where she lectures for the Association and other organizations on legal issues affecting public education. She is a frequent contributor to NYSSBA’s OnBoard newspaper, and the editor of NYSSBA’s School Law publication; she also authors amicus curiae briefs filed by NYSSBA on behalf of its members. Ms. Sokol is an active member of COSA’s IDEA Reauthorization Working Group, and has contributed articles for Inquiry & Analysis, presented at COSA seminars, and serves on the 2016 School Law Seminar Committee. Ms. Sokol is a graduate of Albany Law School, where she was a member of the Albany Law Review. Prior to joining NYSSBA, she clerked for the New York State Supreme Court, Appellate Division Third Department. She joined NYSSBA in 1989, then returned following a two year absence to work with the law firm of Shaw, Perelson, May & Lambert LLP representing school districts in New York’s Hudson Valley area. Before attending law school, Ms. Sokol worked on Wall Street for over 12 years, primarily in the area of investor relations.

Vice-Chair
Diane Marshall-Freeman
One year term
Diane Marshall-Freeman is a partner in the Sacramento, California office of Fagen Friedman & Fulfrost, LLP and has over 20 years of experience.
and an extensive background in all areas of general and special education law. She serves as general counsel to the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF). An experienced litigator, Ms. Marshall-Freeman has successfully argued cases at the federal and state levels. She has served on the board for the Omega Boys Club of San Francisco and is the past president of the California Council of School Attorneys. Ms. Marshall-Freeman received her law degree from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Secretary
Phil Hartley
One year term

Mr. Hartley is managing partner of the Gainesville, Georgia law firm of Harben, Hartley & Hawkins, LLP, General Counsel for the Georgia School Boards Association, legal advisor to the Georgia School Superintendents Association, and legal advisor to the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders. After practicing school law for over 34 years, his firm now represents at least 75 percent of the school districts in Georgia. He received his J.D. degree from the University of Georgia Law School where he was a member of the Georgia Law Review, Order of the Coif and Phi Beta Kappa. Mr. Hartley is a frequent author in school law and educational journals and an active advocate in the Georgia courts and the federal courts, including the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals.
Directors for First Two-year Term

Director  
Melissa Barber (CO)  
1st 2-year term  
Ms. Barber is District Legal Counsel for the Boulder Valley School District. She is responsible for administering the overall legal functions of the School District, including providing legal advice to the Superintendent, Cabinet and District Leadership Team. She represents the School District in court hearings and administrative proceedings and provides day to day advice and counsel to central administration, principals and assistant principals. Ms. Barber also coordinates the development and revision of Board of Education policies and provides training on education law topics to school administrators and the District’s new educators. Prior to coming to the Boulder Valley School District, Ms. Barber practiced law for 13 years, most recently at a private law firm representing Colorado school districts in education and employment law matters in state and federal courts. She is an officer with the Colorado Council of School Board Attorneys. Her volunteer activities include judging high school mock trial competitions and Constitution Day presentations to high school students. Ms. Barber obtained her law degree at Cornell University Law School.

Director  
Andrew Manna (IN)  
1st 2-year term  
Andrew Manna is a partner with Church, Church, Hittle and Antrim in the Noblesville, Indiana office. Mr. Manna represents clients in matters associated with labor and employment law, defends school corporations against claims under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), First Amendment and other constitutional and civil rights law matters, and represents schools with respect to general school policy review. Mr. Manna graduated from Eastern Illinois University. Prior to becoming an attorney, he taught social studies in both rural and urban districts. While at the Indiana University School of Law in Indianapolis, he participated in Moot Court and worked as an intern in the Office of the Governor on education policy. Mr. Manna is a frequent speaker on both the state and national level. Outside of the practice of law, Mr. Manna enjoys spending time with his family, running and watching football.

Director  
Debra Silk (MT)  
1st 2-year term  
Debra A. Silk is Associate Executive Director /General Counsel for the Montana School Boards Association, where she previously served as Staff Attorney and Director of Policy Services. Ms. Silk assists MTSBA’s member school districts, oversees staff, programs and services, and assists the Executive Director with Board and Association matters. She is a registered lobbyist and advocate for public education before the Montana Legislature. Before joining MTSBA, Ms. Silk practiced law in Idaho, where her firm served as General Counsel to the Idaho School Boards Association and represented many Idaho districts. She obtained her law degree from the University of Idaho. She has a strong passion for public
education and enjoys advocating on behalf of MTSBA’s member school districts and public education generally.

Director

James Thomeczek (MO)

1st 2-year term

Jim Thomeczek is a partner with Thomeczek and Brink in St. Louis, Missouri. He has been practicing school law in Missouri for nearly thirty years. A former high school English teacher, Jim graduated from St. Louis University School of Law with honors and was named to the Order of the Woolsack. He began his practice with a large St. Louis law firm, originally focusing on labor and general school matters. He soon shifted the focus of his practice to special education. In the mid-1990’s, Jim started a boutique law firm that concentrates its practice on issues arising under the IDEA and Section 504. He has argued several special education cases to the Eighth Circuit, including Light v. Parkway. Jim and his wife have five children and a new grandson.

Directors for Second Two-year Term

Director

Joy Baskin (TX)

2nd 2-year term

Ms. Baskin is the Director of Legal Services of the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). She oversees the division’s activities and informs TASB’s other service areas about legal developments. As a staff attorney, Ms. Baskin served as the coordinator of TASB’s Legal Assistance Fund and helped develop and review districts’ local policies. She assisted in developing and presenting many of the division’s legal training programs and is a frequent presenter on school law topics, including open government, student issues, and religion in schools. She received her law degree with honors from The University of Texas School of Law. Ms. Baskin is an active member of the school law section of the State Bar of Texas, including serving on its executive council as Chair of the section. She currently serves as a member of the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth, and Families Education Committee. Ms. Baskin is an active member of COSA’s State Outreach Committee.

Director

Kathleen Mehfoud (VA)

2nd 2-year term

Ms. Mehfoud is a partner with Reed Smith in the Richmond, Virginia office. She focuses her practice on education law, including the representation of school boards in special education matters such as issues relating to eligibility, placement, IEP, discipline and due process hearings. She lectures extensively on a national basis on special education issues and has published on the subject. She has been named as one of America’s leading Education Law attorneys in The Best Lawyers in America (2007-2013 editions). She received her law degree from University of Richmond School of Law. She was chair of the 2014 School Law Practice Seminar, an active participant in COSA’s IDEA Reauthorization Working
Group, and a frequent contributor and presenter for COSA webinars and seminars.

Director
W. Joseph Scholler
2nd 2–year term
Mr. Scholler is a member with Frost Brown Todd, LLC, in West Chester, Ohio. He spends the majority of his time as general counsel, litigation counsel and labor and employment counsel. He serves clients in both private and public sectors of varying sizes and budgets. Mr. Scholler was selected to 2012 Ohio Super Lawyers list and was named to the Cincinnati Business Courier list of Forty under 40, which recognizes professional success and community involvement. He is a member of the executive committee of the Ohio Council of School Board Attorneys. He received his law degree from University of Dayton School of Law. He was an adjunct professor at Miami University and taught graduate level school law.

Director
Patricia J. Whitten
2nd 2–year term
Patricia J. Whitten is a partner in the Education Law Practice Group at Franczek Radelet P.C., in Chicago, Illinois. Her practice involves all aspects of education law, including litigation at all levels of state and federal courts and administrative agencies. She has an in-depth background in constitutional and civil rights, including educational equity and desegregation issues, labor and employment, vendor contracts, tax and finance, board policy and administrative matters, and legislative drafting and interpretation. Her practice in recent years has had a particular focus on special education law and educational equity issues and related litigation. Patti has participated in several precedent-setting cases in the federal courts, including authoring amicus curiae briefs on behalf of NSBA. She is an active participant in COSA’s IDEA Reauthorization Working Group. Patti served as general counsel for the Chicago Board of Education for more than 11 years, and prior to that she spent most of her legal career in the Chicago Board’s Law Department. Since 2007, Patti has been selected annually as one of the Illinois Super Lawyers in the area of Schools and Education Law.