

Rick Metz, lobbyist

Happy new year to all COAHPERD members. There is a glimmer of optimism with some of our favorite Representatives and Senators at the capitol. The very slow economic recovery will make it extremely difficult to introduce any significant educational legislation that carries a financial note. However, the financial deficit “cloud” over our capitol may be a lighter shade of grey compared to year’s past.

My summer and fall were full of strategy meetings with a wide variety of political people from our supportive organizations network. The effort to lobby the Colorado State school board for a high school physical education requirement has been delayed as the board will ask the legislature for 1-3 years to examine the issue. This timeline may be disappointing but it was encouraging to see that the State school board did listen to the testimony of many physical educators during “town hall” meetings and decided to examine the issue further. The revision work with the CDE school health performance measures culminated with a few question changes that should result in ground work for a reporting mechanism for HB 1069. One question will ask if 30 minutes of physical activity is offered to all students. These are small but important steps to bringing our cause for required physical education to the policy makers and the right time in the future.

The General Session will begin on January 11th this year and is scheduled to continue until May 9th. This will be Representative Nancy Todd’s last year in the House of Representatives. The good news is that Representative Todd is running for a Senate seat next year. Nancy’s husband, Terry, has begun a campaign to run for the Representative seat vacated by his wife. Terry is a retired physical education teacher as well as a past president of COAHPERD. Next year could be a great year to address physical education issues on the state level.

The American Heart Association with their new lobbyist, Suzanna Morris, will be presenting some legislation this session and COAHPERD will assist. Removing trans fats from school meals and an AED bill are being drafted. Suzanna and several other HEAL (healthy eating active living) coalition members will be invited to participate in a legislative session at the upcoming February, Central District convention in Colorado Springs. Representative Nancy Todd and candidate Terry Todd should be in attendance also.

COAHPERD signed a letter from AAHPERD to the secretary of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. The letter urged the HHS department to revise the Activity Guidelines for Americans. Several HEAL coalition members signed the letter as well. I received a response from the office of the assistant secretary of Health and Human Services thanking us for the request. The acting director, Carter Blakey, stated that an option of forming a scientific advisory committee was being considered. The timeline for review is not until 2016 with a document release of 2018. AAHPERD with COAHPERD’s support will continue to supply meaningful data for a realistic Activity Guideline revision.

This year will be another opportunity to promote quality physical education at the capitol. COAHPERD is recognized and respected in the legislative chambers. It is very important that our cause for increasing quality physical education time for the children of Colorado is voiced often to decision makers at the capitol. We know that quality physical education taught by certified staff is an important part of our nation's battle against childhood obesity, soaring insurance costs, unhealthy adults and inactive lifestyles. I pledge to share the data which proves that quality physical education is linked with higher academic performance, higher attendance rates and healthier young adults living active productive lives. Please email, rickmetz@g.com or call 303-642-2802 if you need more information or want support of your quality physical education program.