

Regional Meetings Report

By David Cyprian

Every September, VSBA staff hit the road to visit each of our eight regions to meet with board members on a regional scale and conduct business. This year's meetings were a success, due to higher-than-usual turnout and an overall positive response to our fiscally-minded feature presentation, "Current Realities 2010." VSBA Executive Director John Nelson, Associate Director Winton Goodrich, and I each attended as many of the meetings as we could, but due to schedule conflicts we all could not be at each one.

The main order of business at the meetings is to elect regional officers to the VSBA Board of Directors, as well as elect regional representatives to the VSBA's Resolutions Committee. Each region elects a president (P), and vice-president (VP). Each region also elects a Resolutions Committee member (R) and a Committee alternate (RA). Here are the results of the regional elections. Each member is listed along with a board that he or she serves on.

Addison Region

P: Kristin Bristow, Waltham
VP: Jane Low, Mt. Abraham
R: Bonita Bedard, Mr. Abraham
RA: Kurt Haigis, Ferrisburgh

Bennington/Rutland Region

P: Ken Swierad, Bennington
VP: Ed Hemmer, Shrewsbury
R: Raymond Mullineaux, Bennington
RA: Adrienne Raymond, Shrewsbury

Chittenden/Grand Isle Region

P: G. Miller, Essex
VP: Darren Carner, Milton
R: Fred Lane, Burlington
RA: Lorna Jimerson, CVU

Essex/Caledonia/Orleans Region

P: Deb Cogan, North Country Union
VP: Steve Mason, Lowell
R: Linda Blakslee, Concord
RA: Karl Goulding, Concord

Franklin/Lamoille Region

P: Lucy Ramsay, Berkshire
VP: Elaine Carpenter, Fairfax
R: Kathy Gaston, Enosburg Falls
RA: Celeste Kane-Stebbins, Sheldon

Orange/Washington Region

P: Chris Preston, Waits River

VP: *vacant*

R: Rama Schneider, Williamstown

RA: Angelo Odatto, Randolph UHS

Windham Region

P: Emily Long, Leland & Gray

VP: Russ Capron, Bellows Falls

R: Ruth Barton, Rockingham

RA: Lauren Poster, Marlboro

Windsor Region

P: Larry Kraft, Springfield

VP: Carl Groppe, Stockbridge

R: Mike Reali, Barnard

RA: Jeanice Garfield, Springfield

“Current Realities 2010” is a 25-minute PowerPoint presentation, with narration, that highlights the fiscal challenges boards will be facing in this budget cycle, as well as further out projections. It examines the tremendous deficits that face the state’s General Fund, rising education property taxes, and the perspective of state policymakers on how to address these challenges. It also examines changing demographics of our state, including our graying population, aging teaching workforce, and declining student enrollment. The presentation ends by underscoring the importance of managing your school’s labor force, and offered a few modest suggestions for improving efficiencies in school operations. The presentation is available for viewing on VSBA’s website, and it was shown at the VSBA/VSA conference at Lake Morey.

After the presentation ended, we had a healthy discussion around the presentation and what the fiscal climate means for local boards. For example, board members were interested in the status of contract negotiations in each others’ districts, whether teachers’ retirement payments would become an education fund obligation, and how other districts have approached early retirement options for faculty.

For those of you who were unable to attend your region’s meeting, we encourage you to save the date next year. Members appeared genuinely interested in swapping stories and comparing notes on how their neighbors’ boards operate and taking away some of the hard data that VSBA provided. It also allowed for a dialogue between members and VSBA staff, and gave us some good suggestions for how we can serve you better and be more accessible in the future.