



Initiatives & Accomplishments

BUSINESS/WORKFORCE

TENNESSEE JOBS COALITION The Roundtable serves on the board of directors and works with the newly formed Tennessee Jobs Coalition. It is a group of business associations that recognize the role of the workplace and the individual employee in creating new jobs, personal wealth at all levels and economic prosperity for all Tennesseans. The TN Jobs Coalition is dedicated to encouraging current and future investment, development and job growth in all business sectors in the state. The Coalition is focused on providing leadership to ensure that the workplace is effective, efficient and productive. Issues such as government mandates, workers comp, immigration, tort reform, right to work and business taxes are addressed by the coalition.

JUDICIAL SELECTION The Roundtable's Judicial Selection committee has worked to improve the understanding and the need for a business and employer minded judiciary in our state. It has worked to oppose the popular election of statewide judges and to maintain the current "Tennessee Plan."

TENNESSEE STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION Appointed by the Governor, the TBR executive director serves on the commission representing the business community on workforce and labor issues that affect the prosperity and quality of the workplace for employers, employees and Tennesseans.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION Work to promote and encourage business/education legislation that will prepare the workforce, reform our education system and improve the business climate enriching the lives of all Tennesseans.

Please see TBR Legislative and Policy Agenda for specific issues.

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EDUCATION

TENNESSEE DIPLOMA PROJECT The TN Diploma Project is the foundation for education reform in our state and is our most important agenda item. The Roundtable serves on the TDP leadership team partnering with the Governor's office, TN Department of Education, TN State Board of Education and Higher Education with a mission to: 1) Align high school standards with the demands of college and work 2) Require students to complete a college and work ready curriculum to ensure that earning a diploma prepares students for college and work 3) Build college and work ready measures into high school assessment systems 4) Hold our education system accountable for student preparation and success.

In January 08 – the TN State Board of Education completed the first phase of the project by raising our school standards aligning the Tennessee High School curriculum with the demands of college and work. Other activities include:

- Testified to the Joint meeting of the TN State Board of Education and THEC.
- Represented business on the TN Diploma Project attending leadership summits sponsored by the national organization, Achieve, working with 33 other states on education reform.
- Representing business in the Bill Gates "College and Career Ready Institute" that selected Tennessee as one of the 8 states ahead of the others on the education reform agenda.
- Partner with Chambers of Commerce, education foundations and other business entities to move the education reform agenda forward building "grassroots" and engagement across the state.

ANNUAL EDUCATION SUMMIT The Roundtable has hosted four annual education summits focusing on education reform, including addressing the math and science crisis and building partnerships between the business and education communities. Former US Senator Bill Brock and Dr. Mark Tucker addressed our attendees examining the controversial report "Tough Choices Tough Times" - a paradigm shifting model for education reform in Tennessee and the nation. The fifth annual summit will be conducted Fall 09.

TENNESSEE P-16 COUNCIL The Roundtable serves on the TN P-16 Council with the mission to encourage high school/university collaboration, leading to increased academic achievement and success among all students across the state. The council works with the GEAR UP project which serves an estimated 6,000 students per year in 9 counties and 47 schools. The project is designed to promote student achievement, enhance awareness and expand access to post-secondary education statewide.

GORDON FEE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AWARD This award is presented each year by TBR recognizing a member who, like long-time TBR Board member, Gordon Fee, has shown personal leadership, extraordinary dedication and committed volunteer service to promoting excellence in education in our state. Gordon Fee was the first recipient of the award in 2008 and presented by Gov. Bredesen.

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CIVILITY IN GOVERNANCE:

CIVILITY TASK FORCE

Partnering with the Howard Baker Center for Public Policy and the Bi-partisan Policy Center in Washington DC, the Roundtable established the first statewide Civility in Governance task force whose mission is to create a series of real-world solutions to a problem harming the foundation of our system of governance – the lack of civility in political discourse.

FORUM/PUBLIC MEETING

The Roundtable has hosted two civility forums including a “public meeting” that featured a conversation with Senator Bob Dole, Senator Tom Daschle and Governor Bredesen discussing civility in their own careers and experiences as well as the importance of civility in our nation and society.

Partnering with the Governor’s office, First Amendment Center, Belmont University and the Baker Center, the Roundtable hosted a forum entitled, “Is Uncivil Discourse Sabotaging American Politics and Governance?” at Belmont University. The forum, moderated by CNN’s Bernard Shaw, included Governor Haley Barbour, Pat Schroeder, Bill Nichols and Mark Whitaker in a panel session. The forum and release of the “Civility in Government – Principles and Exemplars” booklet were recognized by the Governor and Mrs. Bredesen at a dinner and reception held at the Governor’s residence to celebrate the Presidential debate at Belmont University the night before the event.

TRAINING FUTURE LEADERS

The Roundtable will partner with the Baker Center to create a full series of “Training Future Leaders in the Civility of Governance” to be implemented at colleges and universities across the state. The goal is to create a model program that can be shared with other states to begin training and teaching students and faculty about the important of civil discourse and working together for the good of the nation. At the end of the series, lessons learned and program details from the series will be compiled and published into a training document for other states who are interested in civility standards to use in programs for training future leaders in civility and statesmanship.

EDUCATION CONTINUED...

VIRTUAL ENTERPRISE SCHOLARSHIP The objective of the program is to introduce 17-year old students from the public sector to the competitive market exposing them to making business related decisions. Virtual Enterprise is a computer simulated program in which different companies must compete in the production and marketing of a product. Each group of students, composed of three participants, must create a company, give it a name, and expose it to competition. The Roundtable sponsors the annual competition offering a scholarship to the winning school chosen in the competition.

TBR ANNUAL MEETING Recognized state and national leaders speak at this event to update the members on important topics such as education reform, economic development, government mandates and healthcare. This year, Senator Bill Frist discussed his vision of education reform in Tennessee. Supreme Court Justice – William Koch presented the courts view of judicial selection and Governor Bredesen updated the group on the state’s budget and financial future. During an election cycle – the Roundtable hosts a formal and moderated gubernatorial debate with all candidates participating. The Roundtable conducts the annual spring membership meeting to discuss pertinent policy, legislation and issues that affect the business community in Tennessee.

AMERICA’S PROMISE DROPOUT SUMMIT The Roundtable partnered with America’s Promise, the Governor’s office, TN Department of Education, Volunteer TN, State Farm, AT&T and other educational organizations to host the 09 America’s Promise Dropout Summit called “Moving Forward Graduation Summit.” Over 250 attendees gathered in Nashville from the 10 lowest ranking school systems to learn how to conduct a local dropout summit, address the issue and build local and regional coalitions to decrease the number of dropouts in these hard hitting areas. Speakers included Gov. Bredesen, Gregg Morton – AT&T CEO, Margarite Kondrake – America’s Promise national director and other state and national business and education leaders.

HIGHER EDUCATION BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE / GRANT INITIATIVE This year, the Roundtable hosted a higher ed focus group inviting statewide business leaders to provide input on how we collectively deliver affordable and valued higher education to Tennesseans. This higher ed “committee” of business leaders will work with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) to receive a working grant that will focus on identifying ways to substantially increase the number of post-secondary credentials / degrees for the dollars we spend. Higher education governance, structure and efficiency will be a priority discussion item this year and the Roundtable will be at the table.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FORUM OF TENNESSEE The Roundtable has served as an “organizational” partner with the Niswonger Foundation and the Hyde Family Foundations to create a new CEO group to focus on education reform, sustainability of the high standards and creating effective and long term professional development including well trained and qualified teachers. Leading corporations and organizations that will serve as the Board of Directors include: Pilot Corp, Clayton Homes, AT&T, Ingram Industries, ORNL, Federal Express, Ayers Foundation, Eastman Chemical Co, AutoZone, LandAir and the Tennessee Business Roundtable. TBR will partner with the new organization on various education issues and initiatives.