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## Seizing the Opportunities

It's a new era in Washington, D.C. Although our nation faces enormous challenges, optimism and hope are in the air. As you read this, the Obama administration is under way and the 111th Congress has already been on the job for nearly a month.

We must take hold of the opportunities created by the changes that are taking place. President Barack Obama has made it clear that he considers education to have an integral role in improving the economy, and he has given it a prominent place in his stated plans. This is an invitation for principals to be strong advocates for children, the principalship, and education overall. As a principal, you have the power to change children's lives for the better, and being an advocate can help make that a reality.

### Making Moves on the Hill

In February, NAESP's Federal Relations Coordinators, some members of the Association's Board of Directors, and others will gather for the annual Federal Relations Conference. The conference participants will make hundreds of visits to the offices of U.S. senators and representatives, telling the unique story of the principalship and urging Congress to take action on early childhood education, federal education funding, and other issues of particu-

lar importance to NAESP members. Later this year or early in 2010, we may see movement on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; currently No Child Left Behind) and the child nutrition programs.

### NAESP Alignment With Obama's Initiatives

As a pre-K-8 principal, you have valuable information that Congress needs to have. Your perspective is like no other, and it's important for you to keep your legislators informed and committed to advancing policies that will help your students and your school succeed.

Obama has named his Zero to Five early childhood education initiative as one of his education priorities, and NAESP has already met with key Obama administration officials to discuss this important issue. NAESP supports voluntary universal preschool and has articulated a clear set of guidelines for principals and others who lead early childhood education programs in our publication, *Leading Early Childhood Learning Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do*. Copies of the publication were given to Obama transition team members in December, and we look forward to working with the Obama administration and Congress on early childhood education legisla-

tion that will incorporate NAESP's information and views.

The president has also articulated his interest in supporting principals and teachers by providing additional training and resources while continuing to hold education professionals accountable for student success. Like NAESP, Obama has expressed his support for the laudable goals of No Child Left Behind but has also stated his interest in making the next version of the ESEA less reliant on standardized test scores and more focused on helping principals, teachers, and other professionals to incorporate their own best ideas and judgment in moving children toward greater success.

NAESP is pleased that during the campaign, Obama proposed the creation of challenge grants for states and local districts to use in creating or enhancing leadership academies to provide principals with ongoing professional development opportunities. We are committed to collaborating with the administration toward the enactment of this and other initiatives that promote principals' professional growth and autonomy.

I encourage you to seize the day, *carpe diem*, and use your unique, powerful voice on behalf of children, the principalship, and education. You can make a difference! ■

## Be a LEADer for Your Profession

Make your voice heard by joining the political process with NAESP's Leading Educators' Advocacy Dashboard (LEAD). Principals are experts on the teaching and learning in their buildings and can easily identify the challenges and successes their schools have faced. With only a few minutes of time per year, principals can make federal legislators aware of what educators truly think and need. NAESP is encouraging principals to become advocates for their profession by using LEAD, an online grassroots advocacy tool available to principals at [www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org).