

Remarks of Dr. Marian Galbraith
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Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee November 14, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

My name is Marian Galbraith. I am a recently retired teacher and currently Mayor of the City of Groton. In 2002 I was the CT Teacher of the Year and finalist for National Teacher of the Year. Since 2002 I have been part of the selection committee for CT Teacher of the Year. In 2009 it became clear that the CT Teacher of the Year was at risk because state and corporate funding faltered. Members of the educational community, primarily former CT Teachers of the Year, formed the CT Teacher of the Year Council with the immediate goal of preserving the CT Teacher of the Year Program. I was a co-founder of the Council and am now its treasurer. My purpose today is to explain the rigorous process by which teachers of the year are selected, and to underscore the important role educators play in both creating, and upholding, high standards.

The Connecticut Teacher of the Year program began in 1952 as a way of recognizing excellence in teaching. The purpose of the program is not to choose the "best" teacher, but rather, to identify one teacher who represents the best of the profession to serve as a representative of what is best about the profession. Local teachers of the year are selected in the spring of that year, and after an intensive application process, site visits and interviews, the state teacher of the year is chosen in October. Local teachers of the year are chosen in a variety of ways, but all participate in the same rigorous process at the state level. Each teacher completes an application which is read and scored by at least five members of the selection committee. Approximately 14 of these teachers become semifinalists and are then interviewed here at the Legislative office Building.

Semifinalists prepare a presentation for the committee and then are asked to extemporaneously speak to 5 issues in education. Four finalists are then chosen and the selection committee then conducts site visits, observing classroom instruction and interviewing members of the school community from students to school board members. This entire process is managed by the CT

Teacher of the Year Council, a board made up of members of the education committee but primarily former teachers of the year.

The Selection Committee itself is comprised of former teachers of the year, as well as representatives of CAS, CAPSS, PTO, CABE, AFT-CT, and CEA. Educators, specifically teachers, are integral parts of this committee and form the majority. Former teachers of the year such as myself, play an important role in the selection process. Because we know quality teaching and are seen as exemplary teachers ourselves, we are entrusted with this important task. The CT Teacher of the Year Council is committed to increasing the voice and role of educators in important educational decisions.

I have also had the opportunity to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. From soup to nuts the process of National Board Certification relies heavily on classroom teachers making crucial decisions about how to define and identify high qualified teachers. The Board of Directors is comprised of a majority of classroom teachers as are the groups which create the assessments, set the standards and do the scoring.

How does this information pertain to an independent standards board? Simply stated, in both of these situations, teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of creating and maintaining the highest standards for their peers, which is similar to the makeup and charge of an independent standards board.