ELECTED V. APPOINTED SUPERINTENDENTS

Over twenty years ago, the Education Improvement Act ordered the move from elected superintendents to appointed.1 Every year since then, legislation has been introduced to allow counties to elect their local school superintendents. For the following reasons, this legislation should be rejected:

- Superintendents should be hired based on qualifications and skills, not on political savvy. Furthermore, the appointment of superintendents would allow for a larger pool of qualified applicants, expanding it beyond county or district applicants.

- A superintendent should be accountable to a board of education which is elected by the public. The board should have the ability to dismiss a superintendent for not meeting goals and standards set by the board. An elected superintendent would not be accountable to a board of education and would therefore render the board insignificant and ineffective.

- An appointed superintendent has an incentive to cooperate with the board on reaching their shared goals. An elected superintendent creates the undesirable situation of divided control and separate agendas, which distracts from the overall mission of student learning.

- In the event of an ineffective elected superintendent, it would take four years to replace him or her. We can not afford to let gaps in student needs and learning go unaddressed until the next election cycle. If students are not getting what they need in time, they will never be able to recover.

- Finally, even if elected superintendents are of satisfactory quality, there is no continuity of leadership and vision.

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1 See T.C.A. §49-2-203(a) (14).