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Campaign 2014 News

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### **Inserting Gifted Education into the Campaign Season**

For many, particularly those of you living in states with hotly contested elections - and, as a result, an endless stream of negative television commercials, robocalls and campaign mail - Election Day may not come soon enough.

However, as we strive to do all we can to serve our nation's high-achieving and high-potential students, we should take advantage of election-related events, media, and related activity to draw attention to high-ability learners and their unique needs.

This year is a major election cycle: Up for grabs are all 435 U.S. House seats, 36 Senate seats, 36 gubernatorial offices and most state legislative races. In addition, a number of lesser but still important races at the state, county and local levels will be held. As Nick Manetto discussed during his presentation to the state affiliate leaders in March, election season offers advocates excellent opportunities to engage candidates on our issues and to build on media coverage of campaigns and candidates to increase visibility of gifted education.

If your state association has have taken action related to elections (e.g., distributed candidate questionnaires, invited candidates to speak to your members), please let NAGC know about it so we can share your story and encourage others to take similar actions. If you have yet to do so, you still have time, particularly as we move toward the end of summer and into fall, the time when interest in elections is at its peak. Specifically, we would encourage you to focus on the following two activities:

Attend a candidate forum and ask a question pertinent to high-ability students. Candidate forums offer great opportunities for voters to pose questions directly to those seeking to represent them in public office. State groups could have an significant impact if they recruited just one advocate to raise questions in each competitive state legislature or state board of education race. Of course, your

state's advocacy agenda would guide the types of questions to be asked. Also keep in mind that follow-up is necessary to help candidates develop their positions on gifted education and to hold them accountable once in office.

Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper. Keep an eye on election coverage, particularly when focused on education issues. If your newspaper writes an article on an election and focuses on education issues, use that opportunity to write and submit a brief (i.e., 150 words) letter-to-the-editor making the case for policies that support high-achieving and high-potential learners. By getting advocates in all corners of your state prepared to do this and by focusing on a similar message related to your advocacy agenda, you have the opportunity to get multiple letters published throughout your state before Election Day. State leaders might also consider authoring an op-ed piece for the newspaper in your state capital or in a key legislative district that links the need for policy changes in your state to what candidates are saying. Check out the working with the media page on the NAGC website.

NAGC encourages state association leaders to develop an election year strategy for key state elections that you can implement right after Labor Day. If you have questions or would like to discuss specific ideas, please contact me!

Thank you for all you do to support your members and to educate decision makers!

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