

2014 TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit



Cathy McCabe and Yurimi Grigsby

2014 is an important anniversary year. It is the 40th anniversary of *Lau v. Nichols* and the passage of the Equal Education Opportunity Act, and the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Members of the ITBE board and TESOL International celebrated this landmark year by participating in the 2014 TESOL Advocacy and Policy Summit.

On June 22-24, Cathy McCabe, instructor at Western Illinois University, Ruby Kumar, a classroom teacher in Chicago Public Schools, and Yurimi Grigsby, professor at Concordia University Chicago, joined over 75 other members from over 20 US affiliates of TESOL International Association in Washington, D.C. The only event of its kind in the United States, the TESOL

Advocacy & Policy Summit is an unparalleled professional development opportunity for educators to learn about U.S. federal education issues and advocate for policies that support English learners and the field of English language education.

Now in its ninth year, the program featured a full a day of issue briefings and activities around education legislation and advocacy, followed by a day of visits to Congressional offices on Capitol Hill. By the end of the event, TESOL members had visited the offices of approximately 100 Representatives and Senators.

Participants met with their Congressional representatives from their states. As teachers and teacher educators, it was in this way that our voices were so powerful; that we could share with our representatives the challenges and impact that certain bills would have on our students and our profession. Each of us could identify examples from our own state and classroom to illustrate our perspectives and illuminate their offices with relevant experiences to provide context and open insights into our world as educators.

Featured at this year's summit were Carlos Martinez, Division Director at the U.S. Department of Education in the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA); Debra Suarez, ELL Education Program Specialist within the Division of Adult Education and Literacy in the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE); Emily McCarthy, Deputy Chief in the Educational Opportunities Section of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice; and Diane Staehr Fenner, president of DSF Consulting, specializing in English learner achievement.