

## What is COSSBA?

Founded by 22 state school boards associations in late 2021, the Consortium of State School Boards Associations (COSSBA) is a non-partisan, national alliance dedicated to sharing resources and information to support, promote, and strengthen state school boards associations as they serve their local school districts and board members.

COSSBA is a voluntary, non-partisan federation of state school boards associations focused on:

- Support for the work of state school boards associations through effective staff collaboration, networking, and shared resources
- Networking opportunities for local school board members and association board members to enhance the effectiveness of their work
- Tracking and advocating for federal education issues and policies impacting local school boards and public education aligned with a statement of core values and beliefs of COSSBA
- Federal judicial advocacy impacting local control and public education

The Consortium shall strive to undertake all activities in a manner aligned with the following Guiding Principles:

- Focused and responsive
- Transparent and efficient
- Reflective and relevant
- Representative and accountable
- Unified

## How is COSSBA different from any other national organization?

COSSBA is an alliance of state school boards associations formed by state school boards associations to support, promote, and strengthen each other in support of excellence in local school board governance resulting in high quality public education and access to educational opportunities for every student. Its focus is on building and maintaining a unified Consortium that is flexible, focused, responsive, relevant, collaborative, transparent, accountable, reflective, and representative of our members.



## What states are currently members of COSSBA?

- Alabama Association of School Boards
- Arkansas School Boards Association
- Florida School Boards Association
- Georgia School Boards Association
- Idaho School Boards Association
- Illinois Association of School Boards
- Indiana School Boards Association
- Kentucky School Boards Association
- Louisiana School Boards Association
- Michigan Association of School Boards
- Minnesota School Boards Association
- Mississippi School Boards Association
- Missouri School Boards Association
- Montana School Boards Association
- New Hampshire School Boards Association
- North Carolina School Boards Association
- Ohio School Boards Association
- Pennsylvania School Boards Association
- South Carolina School Boards Association
- Tennessee School Boards Association
- Virginia School Boards Association
- Wyoming School Boards Association

Additional state associations are expected to join COSSBA during Fiscal Year 2023.

COSSBA is currently the largest national organization representing state school board associations in terms of both number of students and boards of education represented.

## How do other states join as members?

Membership and participation are open to all state school boards associations. State associations may join upon approval by their board and submission of the first-year dues payment.

All state associations that made an initial financial commitment of “seed funding” prior to March 31, 2022, and a commitment to pay requisite 2022-2023 dues have been appointed to voting seats on the Transition Steering Committee (TSC). The TSC is made up of a state executive and seated member of the state association board.

## **Is COSSBA non-partisan?**

Yes. The founding state associations are committed to a national organization that remains non-partisan. While states are sometimes defined based upon party lines and voting patterns, the education of children is not. The core purpose of the Consortium is to form, serve, and empower a national, non-partisan alliance of state school boards associations that are dedicated to ensuring public school board leaders obtain high-quality training and support in order to provide excellent and equitable public education in local communities throughout the nation.

## **What is the Transition Steering Committee (TSC)?**

The TSC is comprised of each of the 22 founding state school boards associations, and it serves as the governing body of COSSBA until January 2023. The Illinois Association of School Boards was elected to serve as Chair of the TSC. This structure will remain in place until the permanent governance structure is implemented in January 2023.

## **What is the current status of COSSBA?**

The Transition Steering Committee met in April and May and took the following action:

- Approved Articles of Incorporation.
- Approved the North Carolina School Boards Association to serve as the fiduciary agent.
- Approved the formation of the Urban Boards Alliance (UBA) and the members of the UBA Advisory Board. This board includes a representative from Illinois.
- Approved a dues structure for membership along with a transitional dues formula for state associations.
- Employed a Transition Manager (Kathy Swope).
- Approved the COSSBA governance structure.
- Approved the FY 2023 Budget.
- Approved finance policies and sponsorship program guidelines.
- Reviewed proposals for federal lobbyists.
- Reviewed proposed constitution and bylaws. The TSC is scheduled to approve bylaws at its August 2022 meeting.

## **What opportunities will COSSBA provide for learning and connecting?**

The inaugural Urban Boards Alliance Symposium is scheduled for September 8-9 in Atlanta, Georgia. The inaugural COSSBA National Conference is tentatively scheduled for March 30-April 1, 2023, in Tampa, Florida. A federal advocacy event is scheduled for September 2023 in Washington D.C.

## How will COSSBA's legislative positions be determined?

COSSBA is a non-partisan consortium of state school boards associations. Public policy and federal advocacy positions will be formulated and based on position statements and resolutions approved by the Annual Business Session during the annual conference planned for Spring 2023.

## What is the Urban Boards Alliance (UBA)?

Because the Illinois Association of School Boards is a member of COSSBA local boards may participate in COSSBA's Urban Boards Alliance — with no additional fees or dues. UBA exists to provide support to boards that serve students in challenging environments in districts with issues in:

- Equity, literacy, and student achievement
- School infrastructure
- Bullying
- Broadband access
- Drugs and alcohol
- Gangs and violence
- Homelessness
- Human trafficking
- Mental health
- Poverty
- Food insecurity
- Suicide
- Trauma
- Socioeconomics
- Demographics

The inaugural UBA Symposium is scheduled for September 8-9 in Atlanta, Georgia. Registration opens on July 1, 2022. All IASB members are eligible to attend. For more information about the Symposium visit <https://www.cossba.org/symposium/>

IASB also has a board member from an urban board of education serving on the Urban Alliance Advisory Board to the COSSBA Board of Directors.

## Where can I learn more about COSSBA?

Visit [www.cossba.org](http://www.cossba.org)

## Frequently asked questions about IASB's decision to leave the National Association of School Boards (NSBA)

### 1. What led to the decision by the IASB Board of Directors to leave NSBA?

Since 2008, NSBA membership — including IASB — repeatedly brought forth concerns to NSBA leadership about the national organization's deteriorating financial condition, substantial unfunded pension liability, lack of effective governance, stipends paid to NSBA officers, lack of financial oversight, competition with state associations, leadership issues, and a failure to address the needs of the membership.

NSBA's unwillingness to change past practices and address the serious concerns of the membership led to several initiatives to reform the organization over a 14-year period. At least six different governance reviews were conducted during that period, — yet none produced the changes needed by the membership. The California School Boards Association suspended membership in NSBA in 2019 followed by IASB in November 2020, to underscore the serious concerns of the membership about the national organization. Both organizations continued to work toward the reforms necessary to salvage the national organization.

In August 2021, NSBA member associations put forth 31 amendments to the NSBA Constitution — aiming to save the association by bringing about necessary changes. Most of these amendments were approved. This gave some members, including IASB, some hope that conditions would improve. Unfortunately, just one month later NSBA put its existence in jeopardy by authoring a letter to the President without input from or approval of its membership — contradicting its recently amended constitution.

### 2. Was the NSBA letter to President Biden the reason why IASB left the national organization?

No. The decision to terminate membership was made in response to a persistent pattern of dysfunction, ineffective governance, lack of transparency, and financial issues that have plagued NSBA for nearly two decades. It followed repeated attempts by representatives of IASB and other state associations to bring about the changes necessary to ensure the viability of the national organization and to retain its member state associations. The IASB Board of Directors previously suspended membership in NSBA for 2021-2022. The suspension of membership was made to allow time for a final effort to effect change with NSBA.

The letter did serve as affirmation that NSBA was not going to change its practices. The damage resulting from the letter and related "fallout" led to the conclusion that NSBA could no longer remain a viable national organization and a credible source of federal advocacy.

The decision by the IASB Board of Directors to withdraw from NSBA was not made lightly. State associations rely on a healthy national organization to provide training requested by the members, federal advocacy, shared resources, and networking opportunities. IASB no longer believed that NSBA can fill this important role.

**3. Was politics a factor in IASB’s decision to leave the national organization?**

No. The decision to terminate membership in NSBA was made by the IASB Board of Directors after years of attempting to work within the organization’s governance structure to bring about needed changes. The current hyper-partisan political environment led to speculation that this decision was politically motivated or influenced, but that is false. While candidates for office may claim they influenced this decision, it is unequivocally untrue.

**4. Why wasn’t the decision to leave NSBA put before the IASB Delegate Assembly?**

IASB is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, governed by a Board of Directors that has the fiduciary responsibility for the Association. The board met its fiduciary responsibility by acting on behalf of membership to address concerns about the NSBA organization and to terminate its membership in an organization that is no longer financially viable.

**5. What is the status of NSBA?**

Six state associations including California and Texas, announced termination of NSBA membership and are currently unaffiliated. Twenty-two states have joined COSSBA, with three states retaining dual membership in COSSBA and NSBA for the current year.

**6. Will the decision to leave NSBA impact IASB’s commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?**

IASB is firmly committed to its strategic priority to *“Initiate, advocate for, and support efforts to ensure EQUITY, Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice within IASB, its membership and PK-12 Schools.”* The Association also has an internal plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion that is aligned with its Strategic Plan. IASB’s membership in COSSBA allows for any IASB member to access resources and the Urban Boards Alliance.

[IASB Strategic Priorities](#)

[IASB Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion 2020-2023](#)

**7. Do IASB members have any access to NSBA events?**

Yes. NSBA is currently allowing board members from non-member state associations to attend its events at a non-member rate. Note that this practice could be changed at any time by NSBA.

It is strongly suggested that any member who decides to register for an NSBA event carefully consider the association’s cancellation/refund policy and procedures for issuing refunds should the organization cease to exist during Fiscal Year 2023.