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BILL: Senate Bill 904
TITLE: Public Schools – Social Media Use by Educators
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COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs
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Senate Bill 904 requires the State Board of Education to develop a certain model policy for public schools regarding the use of social media by educators; requiring the model policy to include certain guidelines and model forms; requiring each local school system to establish a certain policy regarding the use of social media and to provide certain training; prohibiting an educator from publishing a work product or image of a student on a social media personal account; etc.

PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 904.

PSSAM believes that this legislation is simply not necessary. Local superintendents recognize the fact that social media can be a powerful tool to enhance education and learning. It can help local school systems further our mission and core values by engaging students, their parents/guardians, and the community. Furthermore, we are cognizant of the fact that the use of social media by school system employees must be strictly regulated.

Social media is often defined as any form of web-based or mobile technology that allows interactive communication. We understand that common social media platforms include Blogs (WordPress, Blogger, Tumblr, etc.), Social Networking Sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.), Photo, Audio and Video Sharing Sites (YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Instagram, Snapchat, SoundCloud, etc.), Social Bookmarking Sites (Pinterest, Reddit, etc.) and Wikis (collaborative, openly editable content, such as Wikipedia).

PSSAM has been extremely proactive on the use of social media by staff. To that end, local school systems have already developed extensive social media policies that address the components of this legislation, that are regularly updated, and that clearly define what school systems employees can or cannot do on social media.

Finally, local superintendents must continue to advocate for local board of education governance of teaching and learning. PSSAM strongly believes that it is critical that locally-governed education policies and procedures, to include social media use by our educators, remain under the authority of local boards of education. Each local school board must have the flexibility to develop individual policies and practices that reflect the specific and diverse needs of their system.

For the reasons detailed above, PSSAM opposes Senate Bill 904 and urges an unfavorable committee report.