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From the Publisher...
Choice or Chance: What's in Your Professional Future?

Mid April, more than 60 of our professional colleagues converged on Capital Hill to advocate for physical education. A week later, the House passed a version of the [FIT Kids Act](#), which promises to refocus attention back onto public school physical education. In his supporting remarks on the House floor, Bill sponsor [Ron Kind](#) (D-WI) stated that children need to be "taught at an early age the benefits of active, healthy lifestyles."

On Thursday, celebrity fitness activist [Richard Simmons](#) joined U.S. Reps. Kind (D-WI), Wamp (R-TN), Miller (D-CA), representatives from the American Heart Association, the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association, and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, to celebrate this success at a press event outside the House.

In an era of all too-frequent bad news about physical education program and position cuts, this success story is long overdue. Sadly, the event also highlights the extent to which the vast majority of American physical educators are willing to leave their professional futures to chance.

Simmons has for some time led a [PE crusade](#). He's testified in Congress on the importance of school physical education, held a PE Rally in DC, and given numerous media interviews. But how long will he keep this going? When he stops, what then? Do we hope that the Heart Association or Sporting Goods Manufacturers will continue advocating on our behalf?

Less than half of the 50 States were represented at NASPE's [SPEAK Out](#) Day. Those who were, included Bob and Jill Fox, owners of [Speed Stacks](#), Kymm Ballard from [SPARK](#), Suzanne Sullivan from [ING](#) Financial Services, Beth Kirkpatrick from [Polar](#), Cindy Sisson from [Hop Sports](#), and others outside-the-teaching-profession PE supporters, such as Demeka Cage from Louisiana who heard about the event from the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#).

Physical educators numbered around 40. Teachers were from around the country, and many had taken unpaid leave from their schools and colleges and spent their own money to advocate on behalf of approximately 300,000 teaching colleagues. In total that's a little over a hundredth of one percent of the nation's physical education teaching community.

Okay, not all of us can or want to go to Washington to promote our profession. And we don't need to. We have a remarkably effective, but unfortunately not full time, Government Relations Manager in [Megan Wolfe](#) at NASPE. For SPEAK Out Day, Megan and NASPE staff painstakingly scheduled hundreds of appointments with legislators, created materials, then trained this volunteer task force how best to deliver their PE message on the Hill. It was a great event and passing the FIT Kids Act in the House was a huge success. But the hard truth is that as a teaching community we are perennial underperformers in supporting our profession.

What is puzzling is why more of those who teach physical education apparently see no merit in supporting the profession they depend upon for their livelihood. Too many of us are happy to accept the fruits of other people's PE advocacy, but ignore any responsibility for earning it. As teachers and coaches we preach fair play: But we don't practice it ourselves.

Despite millions of dollars school districts have received through PEP grants, the vast majority of physical educators in recipient districts aren't supporting members of either NASPE or their state professional associations. Where did they think these PEP funds came from? Did they think DC legislators awoke one day and collectively hit upon the same feel-good idea of gifting millions of dollars to physical education?

I recognize I'm mostly preaching to the choir. You're probably a member supporter of our profession. But if you're not, PLEASE think about it. During the economic recession we've all heard stories of program and position cuts. Thank goodness for the obesity crisis. Without it, we'd be in far more desperate professional straits. Lucky for us, groups and individuals *outside* of PE teaching are currently saving us from our own indifference. But it's a risky and high stakes game of chance that, like a house of cards, could crumble upon us at any time.

Amazingly, those who don't support our profession through professional membership and involvement are among the first to complain that we "don't get no respect." Why should we? Large class sizes, small equipment budgets, inadequate facilities, and unqualified teaching colleagues are the consequences of our political naiveté. It should be no surprise that school administrators pay us little regard when we so poorly advocate the benefits of what we do. In today's climate of increasing academic accountability we're probably fortunate it isn't worse.

And sadly, in the absence of change the future doesn't look much better. Few graduates of college physical education programs become member supporters of our profession. PETE faculty - at least if I am an example - do an abysmal job of motivating, persuading or cajoling students to see any role or responsibility beyond "gym" teaching and coaching. We must do a better job both with our teaching colleagues and with the future generation of physical educators to get them to truly embrace the notion of "professionalism."

Membership in and support for NASPE or our state associations isn't just about the publications. We've got to get beyond the "What do I get?" mentality. It's about determining our own future instead of relying on others. It's about accepting responsibility and quitting the whining. It's about becoming a TEAM player and achieving more rather than less. It's about recognizing the connection between sowing and reaping. Ultimately, it's about choice rather than chance. What's in your professional future? Apathy or action? It's up to you to decide.

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