

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**THOMAS J. GENTZEL RECEIVES EPLC'S EDWARD DONLEY
EDUCATION POLICY LEADERSHIP AWARD**
**Former PA School Boards Association Executive Director recognized for
outstanding work in improving education policy**

Harrisburg, Pa. – The Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC) today presented executive director of the National School Boards Association (NSBA), Thomas J. Gentzel, with the Edward Donley Education Policy Leadership Award. For more than 32 years Gentzel served as a leader to advance public education at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

NSBA is the leading advocate for public education and supports equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership. NSBA represents state school board associations and their more than 90,000 local school board members throughout the U.S.

EPLC presents the Edward Donley Education Policy Leadership Award annually to individuals who demonstrate commitment to stronger educational opportunities for all, and who work hard to improve the effectiveness of local, state, and national education policy.

EPLC president Ron Cowell noted, “For more than three decades, Thomas Gentzel has been a dedicated and effective advocate for public education and Pennsylvania’s children, and one of the most influential voices in education policy debates in Pennsylvania and nationally.”

Gentzel’s career at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association began in 1980 as a lobbyist and, five years later, he took the helm of the organization’s Office of Governmental and Member Relations – a position he held for more than sixteen years. He became the organization’s executive director in 2001 and directed a staff of more than 150 people who provide services that include publications, conferences and seminars, as well as insurance programs, management and legal assistance, and advocacy services for local school districts and their board members.

Gentzel is a member of the board of the Learning First Alliance and has served as a board member for the National School Public Relations Association and as a member of the Outreach Advisory Board for Penn State University. He was appointed by Governor

Tom Ridge and reappointed twice by Governor Edward Rendell to the State Advisory Panel on Special Education. In 2009, he was named by the governor to the Pennsylvania Early Learning Council. He previously chaired the Pennsylvania Coalition for Public Education and was founder and coordinator of the Alliance for a School Aid Partnership.

“I’m delighted and honored to receive the Edward Donley Education Policy Leadership Award and be recognized for my work and commitment to promoting excellence in public education,” said Gentzel.

When establishing the “Donley Award,” the EPLC Board of Directors said, “Edward Donley is an exemplary model of dedicated service to children, commitment to stronger educational opportunities for all, and hard work to improve the effectiveness of local, state, and national education policy.”

Donley retired from Allentown-based Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. in 1986, where he completed 43 years of active service to the company, which included 12 years as president of the company and eight years as chairman. During his time at Air Products and since, he has been an extraordinary leader on behalf of education and children.

Donley was the founding chair of The Education Policy and Leadership Center and led the board for nearly ten years. His service also included the Pennsylvania State Board of Education, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the National Assessment Governing Board, the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, the U.S. Chamber’s Center for Workforce Preparation and Quality Education, the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools, the Council for Aid to Education, National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce. He has held many community leadership positions in the Lehigh Valley and has been a leader on behalf of business-education partnerships for decades.

Previous recipients of the Donley Award include Dr. Peter H. Garland (2013), Joseph F. Bard (2012), Dr. Robert E. Feir (2011), Governor Edward G. Rendell (2010), Representative Dwight Evans (2009), Dr. Carolyn Dumaresq (2008), Senator James J. Rhoades (2007), Karl R. Girton (2006), Dr. Paula Hess (2005), and Edward Donley (2004).

The Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC) is an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit organization established in 1998 and based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The mission of EPLC is to encourage and support the development and implementation of more effective state-level education policies to improve student learning in grades P-12, increase the effective operation of schools, and enhance educational opportunities for citizens of all ages.