

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

◆ Senator Tim Cullen ◆

NEA President's Award



Senator Tim Cullen has been a champion of education for over 40 years. His body of work creating policy at the state and local level has continued to ensure that both students and teachers win at every level within the Wisconsin Public School System.

Initially, Senator Cullen wanted to be a high school social studies teacher, but once he started working for former Congressman Les Aspen, he found himself drawn to politics. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Senator Cullen

was elected to the Wisconsin Senate in 1974, representing the 15th district. Combining his love for education and politics, as a state senator, Cullen served on the education committee and was Majority Leader 1981, 1983 and 1985. A strong advocate for public schools, Senator Cullen was awarded The Friend of Education Award in 1983 from the Wisconsin Education Association Council, for the passage of a collective bargaining law.

Cullen would hold the Senate seat until 1987. Republican Governor Tommy Thompson appointed Cullen to head the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services where he served for one year before leaving public service for the private sector, and becoming the vice-president for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wisconsin. While working in the private sector Cullen continued his support and advocacy for public schools by serving on the Janesville School board, the same district where the Senator graduated high school.

In 2007, Senator Cullen, concerned with the lack of educators of color in the Janesville School District, met with then-Superintendent Karen Schulte to learn more about the ratio of students of color to teachers of color. The report showed students of color made up 14% of Janesville's student population; however, only 1% of the 800+ teachers in the district identified as people of color. Senator Cullen quickly took action in developing the "Janesville Minority Teacher Scholarship" (JMST). The proposal would provide a multi-year renewable college scholarship to a student of color for up to \$5,000 per year for tuition, books, and fees to students of the Janesville Schools. In return, the student must pursue a degree in education, obtain a Wisconsin State Teacher Certification, and then apply for a position with the School District of Janesville when they have completed their degree.

Since its inception in 2008, The Janesville Minority Teacher Scholarship has had six graduates who are working in the Janesville Schools with a total of 17 years of experience among them. Four more students are currently taking advantage of the scholarship, with one recipient expected to graduate in the Spring of 2019.

Senator Cullen's commitment to diversity in the classroom, his dedication to quality public education and his lifetime of public service have been instrumental in shaping the Wisconsin Public School system.