



NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT: Gretchen Wright
202/371-1999

Pennsylvania State Representative Honored as an Afterschool Champion in Nation's Capital

*Parents, Educators, Students, Afterschool Leaders, City and State Leaders
Urge Congress to Reject Proposed Funding Cut*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Afterschool Alliance today honored Pennsylvania State Representative Jake Wheatley for his support for afterschool programs at the “Breakfast of Champions,” a gala event in Washington, D.C. Representative Wheatley was one of 16 individuals and four organizations honored for their tireless work on behalf of afterschool programs. He was nominated by the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network.

As a member of the House Democratic Policy Committee, Representative Wheatley helped organize the first legislative hearing on quality afterschool programming and needs in Allegheny County. He has also supported both state and local efforts to raise awareness of afterschool’s role in promoting public education and safety.

Representative Wheatley has participated in the Afterschool Alliance’s national rally for afterschool, *Lights On Afterschool*, and twice sponsored and introduced House Resolutions supporting the event. Last year, his office organized a community-wide *Lights On* celebration that brought together parents, community partners and the Mayor and School Superintendent of Pittsburgh.

The “Breakfast of Champions” is part of the seventh annual *Afterschool for All Challenge* which brings together hundreds of parents, educators, children, program directors and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. The 2008 *Challenge* is co-sponsored by the National League of Cities and the Afterschool Alliance. Following the “Breakfast,” the advocates fanned out across Capitol Hill for meetings with their U.S. Senators and Representatives, and congressional staff.

“Parents, children and communities rely on afterschool programs to keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But federal funding isn’t keeping up with the demand for afterschool, and President Bush proposes to cut federal afterschool funding even further. We’re in our nation’s capital this week to honor afterschool champions and remind lawmakers that these cuts are short-sighted and counterproductive. All kids need the opportunities that afterschool programs provide. Bipartisan

support in Congress defeated the last proposed cut to afterschool programs, and we are seeking bipartisan support again this year so we can counter the President's proposal and bring quality afterschool programs to all children who need them."

This year, President Bush proposed cutting the federal budget for afterschool programs by \$281 million and converting the successful 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative (21st CCLC) into a risky voucher system. If Congress agrees to his proposal, 300,000 students would lose access to afterschool programs.

Other state champions honored at the *Afterschool for All Challenge* are: Boise Mayor David Bieter; Columbia Mayor Bob Coble; St. Paul Mayor Christopher Coleman; Kacy Conley, YMCA of Central Maryland in Baltimore; Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey; Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell; Savannah Mayor Otis Johnson; Morgantown Mayor Ron Justice; Charlotte City Council Member James Mitchell; Missouri State Representative Danie Moore; New York City Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development Jeanne Mullgrav; San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom; Linda Robinson, Kentucky Department of Education; New Hampshire State Senator Kathleen Sgambati; and Maxine Quintana, Denver Mayor's Office for Education and Children.

The Afterschool Alliance and MetLife Foundation also presented the first-ever MetLife Afterschool Innovator Awards at the "Breakfast of Champions" to four organizations that have developed and implemented innovative afterschool practices. The awardees are profiled in *Afterschool Innovations in Brief*, a series of Issue Briefs developed by the Afterschool Alliance with funding from MetLife Foundation. They are: The After-School Corporation in New York; LA's BEST in California; The Native Youth Club in South Dakota; and Lincoln Community Learning Centers in Nebraska.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.