

JOHNNY KEY
Secretary, Department of Education



On March 25, 2015, Johnny Key was approved by the State Board of Education to be the chief school officer of the Arkansas Department of Education. Governor Asa Hutchinson recommended Key for the position of commissioner.

Under Key's leadership, the agency has concentrated on student-focused education. The mission is to provide leadership, support, and service to schools, districts, and communities so that every graduate is prepared for college, career, and community engagement. Before being named commissioner, Key served as associate vice president for university relations at the University of Arkansas System, a position he held since August 2014.

Key began his career in public service in 1997 when he was elected to serve as a justice of the peace on the Baxter County Quorum Court. He was elected to three two-year terms in the House of Representatives, followed by a tenure in the state Senate that began in 2008.

While in the Senate, Key served as chair of: Senate Education Committee; Arkansas Legislative Council Administrative Rules and Regulations Committee; Joint Retirement and Social Security Committee; and Arkansas Lottery Commission Legislative Oversight Committee. He served as vice chair of the Joint Budget Committee; Arkansas Legislative Council Policy Making Committee; Academic Facilities Oversight Committee; and Joint Committee on Public Retirement and Social Security Programs.

Key graduated from Gurdon High School and received a bachelor of science in chemical engineering in 1991 from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He has received many awards, including the 2013 Legislative Pacesetter of the Year by the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading; the 2012 Distinguished Service Award from the Arkansas State University at Jonesboro; 2012 Invest in Life Award from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Cord Blood Bank of Arkansas; the 2011 Guy Newcomb Award from the Arkansas Pharmacists Association; and the 2010 Person of the Year by Arkansas Phi Beta Lambda.

Key and his wife, Shannon, live in Little Rock and have one son, Ryan, and one daughter, Rachel.

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