

## GENERAL SESSION KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Mitchell "Mick" Zais serves as deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on May 16, 2018, after being nominated by President Donald J. Trump on Oct. 5, 2017.

Mick brings to the Department a deep background of experience in education and service to the United States. Prior to joining the Department, Mick was elected South Carolina's 17th state superintendent of education. In this role, he demonstrated a commitment to serving students and to pursuing excellence in education by overseeing the operation of and advocating policy for 82 school districts, 1,250 schools, 51,000 teachers, 720,000 students, and a \$4 billion annual budget. While he was in office from 2011 to 2015, on-time high school graduation rates increased from 72 percent to an all-time high of 80 percent. He also developed and instituted an accountability system whereby every school and district in the state received a letter grade of A through F, based on measures of student growth and student learning outcomes.

Prior to his election as South Carolina's state superintendent of education, Mick served as president of Newberry College for 10 years, from 2000 to 2010. During his tenure, enrollment nearly doubled and, during the last three years of his administration, *U.S. News and World Report* named Newberry College one of America's best colleges.

While at Newberry, Mick served as chairman of the presidents' councils of both the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities and the South Atlantic Athletic Conference. He was also a member of the board of directors for the Foundation for Independent Higher Education, the Lutheran Education Conference of North America, the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, and the Southern Regional Education Board.

Growing up in a military family, Mick attended 10 public schools in 12 years. He then went on to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and to serve 31 years on active duty in the United States Army, retiring as a brigadier general.

Mick earned a Bachelor of Science in engineering from West Point, a Master of Science and a doctorate in social psychology and organizational behavior from the University of Washington, and a Master of Arts in military history from the School for Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He did post-doctoral studies in national security affairs at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

During his military career, Mick served as deputy commanding general at Fort Riley, Kansas, and as an assistant professor at West Point. He also served as a White House aide and as the Pentagon's chief of war plans. Overseas assignments included Vietnam, Korea, Panama, and the Middle East.

His military awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Ranger, Airborne, and Combat Infantryman's badges, and the South Carolina Meritorious Service Medal.

Mick and his wife, Susan, are the parents of two married adult children and the grandparents of three boys and three girls.

