

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

**SUBJECT: POLITICAL ACTIVITIES BY M-DCPS EMPLOYEES**

**COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY, AND GOVERNMENTAL  
RELATIONS**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC  
FRAMEWORK: SCHOOL/DISTRICT LEADERSHIP**

The interest of colonists to have elected representation in order to justify taxation created the impetus for the American Revolution. The ratification of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1870) and 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1920) to the US Constitution extended the right to vote to all male citizens and female citizens, respectfully, and stand as landmarks in our development as a nation. Those amendments lacked substance until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but their significance was in their reiteration of the principles of freedom although social factors impeded their efficacy.

Moreover, suffrage is important because it is a direct extension of liberty and provides citizens the ability to express their opinion through the ballot box. Whereas it is the district's responsibility to develop a foundation of good citizenship in our students, we must continually convey the importance of exercising their right to vote and the need to be involved in the development of their community. The easiest way to achieve that goal is through leading by example.

Fortunately, several employees of the school district have accepted a charge to run for an elected office. Furthermore, former district employees have ascended to the US House of Representatives. District employees who hold and have held an elected office are widely seen as a boon to the district and our efforts to support education.

However, there are concerns regarding the time and resources used in the pursuit of elected office by employees. School Board Member Dr. Marta Perez proffered an agenda item at the School Board meeting of November 12, 2009, which addressed the undue use of influence within the district related to political activity. In light of the memorandum from Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, dated August 26, 2011, it is important that we assess our improvements since 2009 and ensure that we follow best practices.

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**Revised<sup>2</sup>  
Replacement  
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Additionally, the Board Rule and State Statute are clear on the need to avoid campaigning during work hours, but neither sets forth a procedure for reporting such activities. We know from experience that many district employees do not have the means to take unpaid leave to run for an elected office and they will often organize campaign activities around their work schedule. Developing a clear procedure would lessen the opportunity for ambiguity.

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Most importantly, as public servants and custodians of education, it is very important that we are transparent in our procedures and operations. There is public concern regarding the abuse of work time by employees for political activity, as addressed in the Superintendent's memorandum, and it is the interest of the district if we are proactive in responding.

The purpose of this item is to request that the Superintendent review the present practices and schedule a workshop to advise the Board of any proposed changes. Ultimately, we must develop clear parameters within which our employees understand that we support their civic endeavors and community involvement.

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**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
DR. DOROTHY BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to review the current policy related to political activities by district employees and schedule a workshop prior to the December 14, 2011, School Board meeting to report the findings.