

Dr. Marta Pérez, Vice Chair

SUBJECT: INFLUENCE AND MONEY THAT SHOULD BE USED TO SUPPORT THE EDUCATION OF OUR STUDENTS BEING USED ON POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN: IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY OF DECISION-MAKING THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

Alarming political trends are resurfacing and proliferating within the School District.

There is power that comes with political office and we, as public servants, are responsible to be vigilant that this power is not abused. Further, there is a fine line which we must also be careful to distinguish between the use of our office budgets for things that promote the education of our students/constituents with what can be construed as use of taxpayers' monies to promote political campaigns. In the past, some infractions were perhaps not discussed in an effort to be collegial or choosing battles, and because they were minor in comparison to this year's proliferation of political activities within the District. Abuses have caused well-founded concern within our community.

During previous administrations, it was commonplace for powerful Board Members to put pressure on district employees to help finance or participate in political campaigns of the Board Member's choice. Usually, it was the Board Member's own campaign, but it also included the campaigns of others. Most employees felt that if they wanted to advance within the District, they had to contribute, collect money and work politically for Board Members and/or powerful administrators.

This practice was part of the reason for the creation of an "independent" Inspector General. Unfortunately, the IG's office is no longer independent of the Board, and this year there may be widespread abuse and a resurgence of bad past practices.

Equally worrisome is the increasing use of Board Members' office budgets for flyers, calls and ads that are masks for campaigns. It shocks the community and insults them to believe that they can be, or are, fooled by these practices.

I offer the recommendations in this item, not with the desire to offend or create controversy with my colleagues, but to ask that we make conscience efforts to remain true to our mandate of good government as much as possible.

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Perhaps these problems are even more egregious in other forms of federal, state and local governments, but we should hold a mirror to ourselves. We manage the most "sacred" government of all: the education of our students. We should endeavor to be the role models of good public service. We may not always be successful, but we should always look for ways to try.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTA PÉREZ:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida,

1. direct the Superintendent to conduct a workshop before the end of this year that allows the Superintendent and Board Members to discuss proper use of our accounts and ways of minimizing expenses that are, or give the appearance of, campaigning;
2. direct the Superintendent to provide a report, no later than the February 2010 School Board Meeting, on what School Board Member controlled monies have been used in campaigning activities that could have been used for other educational purposes.
3. request the Ethics Committee to recommend language that strengthens the Board Rule regarding the prohibition of the practice whereby Board Members and administrators use their influence to solicit support and/or collect political donations from employees.

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