



We Need a Full Picture of School Board Candidates Before We Vote for Our Choice?

By Educator Barnes – October 28, 2020

Almost every time I am watching a television show and there is a commercial break, I know I am going to see an advertisement for either Victoria Spartz (R) or Christina Hale (D). These women are running against each other for Indiana's 5th Congressional District. A couple of

weeks ago, my son inquired why people were so mean in these advertisements. He also wanted to know why there were names said quickly at the end. I explained that the name at the end was the group that sponsored the advertisement, and their purpose is to tell the audience what is wrong with the other candidate so voters won't vote for the candidate. Then, he said, "I only know the bad stuff. How would a person know who to vote for?"

This conversation resonated with me. All the offices on the ballot are important, but some have my focus more than others. The school board race is a priority for me. I'm a parent with twin sons in fourth grade. We have many more years in the education system. The group of people that are supposed to hold the district accountable for properly educating my children is important.

In Indianapolis, there are 11 school districts, which means there are eleven school boards associated with those districts. Based on the media coverage, you would think there is only one school board race happening in Indianapolis. Indianapolis Public Schools is the largest school district, but Indianapolis residents should not know more about that school board race especially if they live in one of the other ten districts like I do.

The biggest points of contention are donations to candidates running for the IPS school board. Local reporter Dylan McCoy wrote an article highlighting the fact that political action committees have donated \$200,000 to support four candidates running for the IPS school board. Reporter Eric Weddle followed up with an article about the IPS Community Coalition because the organization donated more than \$100 to support four candidates running for the IPS school board. Their grand total expenditure was \$296.92 which is far lower than the amount spent for other board members. If you spend more than \$100 to influence an election, you have to register as a political action committee. I thank McCoy and Weddle for keeping the public in the loop about both of these situations; however, the public has to keep this information in consideration amongst other issues.

I live in Washington Township and some Washington Township residents are more concerned about whether or not a candidate supports school choice than what the candidate wants to do to support Washington Township students. That's a problem. What if the candidate voters barely know anything about gets onto the school board? How can voters hold the person accountable for how the person plans to support students when voters didn't know what the person said he or she would do?

Voters need to know how knowledgeable candidates are about the school district. They need to know what issues they will support. Last, voters need to know how the potential board member's actions will impact children. When citizens vote, they need the whole picture. If voters are not clear on what school board members are planning to do for our children, how can they vote for them? We definitely don't need anymore Connies on our school boards.