

June 19, 2012

Dear Mr. Burrige,

The Pennsbury Education Association (PEA) in the MidEast Region is in need of immediate assistance from PSEA.

Since 2005 Simon Campbell has made it his personal crusade to disrupt and destroy public sector unions throughout this state through his organization Stop Teacher Strikes. I believe you have confronted Campbell personally in hearings where he supported teachers who do not agree with the concept of "fair share". Now, as the majority leader of the Pennsbury School Board, his attacks are focused locally on PEA and PESPA, our support staff organization. Both organizations have been without a new contract for some time and Campbell has publically vowed to never sign a contract which includes such things as dues deduction, Association participation in educational decision making, release time for Association officers, or anything else that helps PEA and PESPA continue to represent our members. Under Campbell's direction the Pennsbury School Board has started the outsourcing process which could cost the jobs of 135 PESPA bus drivers as well as the jobs of maintenance, information technology, and custodial workers.

PEA and PESPA worked with citizen groups to oppose candidates supported by Campbell in the 2011 municipal elections and raised over \$30,000 locally to support pro-education candidates. We were unsuccessful in keeping Campbell from achieving majority status on the board largely due to substantial amounts of money flowing into the district from out of district organizations at Campbell's direction. The Harrisburg based Citizens Alliance of Pennsylvania funded massive mailings and a TV commercial anti-union campaign. Our prospects in the 2013 municipal elections look bleak with Campbell on track to increase his power to a 6/3 majority that would be in place until at least 2015. This would certainly lead to completion of the current board's outsourcing initiative, and a very difficult negotiating situation for both PESPA and PEA. But recent events have given us hope.

Pennsbury currently elects its school board directors from three regions. It is unarguable that the regions are grossly out of balance. Campbell saw an opportunity to extend his sphere of influence through the reapportionment process, and the board has adopted a resolution to petition the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas to approve a new three region plan. A group of local citizens asked the board to look at other options available under the Pennsylvania School Code section 303 such as a nine region plan. The nine region plan was urged because it provides much more local accessibility to, and accountability from school directors; allows a fair chance for the average citizen to campaign and successfully run from the resulting smaller regions; negates the influence of out of district funding; prevents one area of the district from dominating the entire district; and in general better fulfills the idea of representational democracy. The current board majority ignored their request.

That same group of citizens developed a nine region plan meeting the requirements of PA School Code section 303 and came to PEA and PESPA for help in obtaining signatures to petition the court for approval of the nine region plan. PEA and PESPA leaders, including the PESPA Uniserve rep, reviewed the citizen nine region plan and concurred with the assessment that it is very much to our political advantage to pursue this effort for the following reasons in addition to those listed in the previous paragraph.

Due to the geography of the district precincts, and the large size of the precincts in the northern portion of the district where Campbell's power base is concentrated, one of the new regions would contain three members of Campbell's majority (including Campbell himself). One of the members of the majority in that region, Steve Kosmorsky, has a term that runs until 2015. Since there can be only one representative per region in a nine region plan, Campbell and another member of his majority, Kathleen Zawacki, whose terms end in 2013 would find they have no seat to run for re-election. *It should be noted here that should the judge balk at leaving no seats for current board members to seek re-election, the citizens have an alternate nine region plan that allows at least one seat for Campbell and Zawacki to contest. Also note that the citizens group has an alternative three region backup plan which is explained in an addendum to this letter.*

In any event either nine region plan, or the citizen three region alternative plan would make it virtually impossible for Campbell to maintain his majority position on the board. PEA and PESPA agreed to take the issue to the membership.

The minimum number of signatures required for a citizen petition under PA Code section 303-3 is a percentage that works out to 940 signatures. Gary McClure, President of PESPA, and I took the request to gather signatures to our respective members in separate general membership meetings. The member's response was enthusiastic after so many years of negative news. Working with several citizen organizations, but largely through the efforts of PEA and PESPA members 3,867 signatures were gathered in less than a week. That number gathered in such a short time certainly indicates that there is widespread support in the community at large for the citizen's nine region plan.

The citizens group had reasonable assurance that legal assistance would be provided by the Democratic Club of Falls Township and/or the Falls Township Board of Supervisors, neither of which has any love for Simon Campbell. Now, for reasons that are unfathomable to me or the citizen's group, that offer of support has been withdrawn. This is why we need help from PSEA.

The School Board will file their petition with the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas in the very near future, perhaps this week. All of the citizen's pleadings, signed petitions, exhibits, maps, and materials are ready to go, but they have no attorney to file the petition with the court, or to represent them at the hearing. The citizens once again came to us for help through PSEA either supplying legal assistance or monetary help in hiring a private attorney to pursue the case. Time is of the essence.

If the school board plan is presented with no opposing petition it will be a mere formality for the judge to set an early hearing date and simply approve the School District plan. We urgently need your help.

Sincerely,

George Miller
 President, Pennsbury Education Association

Addendum:

The citizens group contends that the district's three region plan does not meet the requirements of PA School Code 24 PS section 303-3 (b) (3) which states in any plan for regional representation "... the population of each region shall be as nearly equal as possible". In support of that they will offer in argument against the district plan a three region plan that has much better numbers than the School District three region plan. Here is the comparison they supplied me:

	Deviation from ideal Population	Percentage of Total Population
Region 1		
Admin. 2	+ 206	33.62 %
Citizen 1	+ 11	33.35 %
Region 2		
Admin. 2	- 449	32.70 %
Citizen 1	- 54	33.26 %
Region 3		
Admin. 2	+ 242	33.67 %
Citizen 1	+ 42	33.39 %

Even if the judge, or the school district for that matter, were to settle on the citizen's alternative three region plan as a compromise it would still inevitably lead to Simon Campbell being in a minority position if he can be re-elected at all. This because of a substantial registration advantage in favor of the opposition to Simon Campbell.

Once again, this effort is the best opportunity we have had for years. We count on PSEA's support.