



***Q & A Regarding Staff Participation in the
South Washington County School District Bond Issue
September 12, 2006***

- Q. What may teachers tell or send home with their students? What if students ask about the bond issue in class?**
- A. You *may* provide information that is factual, such as when and where the election is being held. Information that you use should come directly from your building principal or the DSC Communications Office. You *may not* campaign to vote “yes” or “no” while working in your official capacity as an employee (*i.e.*, teachers at conferences, when instructing or coaching). Discussion regarding the bond issue election is not appropriate for the classroom unless it is related to the curriculum, for example, related to discussion of citizen rights to vote, political process, etc., and/or does not attempt to persuade individuals how to vote on the bond issue.
- Q. What may teachers say in classroom newsletters or tell parents at open houses, conferences, via e-mail, etc.?**
- A. Similar to the question above. Again, principals and the Communications Office will provide teachers with information that is appropriate for them to share. Remember, the underlying principle is: school districts may not expend school district funds to support a particular vote on a proposition. Therefore, newsletters or any official communication from the school may only provide factual information and the fact that there is an election.
- Q. How can I be certain that the information I am providing fits within the legal guidelines?**
- A. The school district will provide staff with information that you can provide to parents and community members.
- Q. What if a community member/parent confronts us on the information we are providing?**
- A. We are sometimes criticized for providing *any* information, including that which is legal and which we are obligated to provide. It is a good idea, therefore, to use information provided to you by the school district. Then, the school district can respond to any criticisms.
- Q. May we use school e-mail as it relates to the bond issue?**
- A. Staff should avoid using district e-mail in any way that relates to campaigning for the bond issue. District administration may be utilizing e-mail to provide factual information regarding the bond issue. If staff wishes to inform parents and the public regarding the facts surrounding the referendum, materials prepared by the district should be used to communicate those facts and inform parents and the public.
- Q. What may we use school district equipment for?**
- A. We *may* use interschool mail, video equipment, etc., to provide factual information regarding many district issues, including its financial condition. We *may not* use school equipment to “get out the vote” or to provide reasons why people should vote “yes” or “no”. Remember, the law provides that school district funds cannot be used to promote an affirmative vote on a proposal. Use of school district equipment would be tantamount to using school district funds.
- Q. When/where may we wear buttons/stickers/t-shirts?**
- A. Staff may not wear buttons/stickers/t-shirts that say “Vote Yes” or “Vote No” during contract hours. Staff may display generic positive messages that may come through the citizen’s committee.
- Q. Do the rules change when we are off-site (*i.e.*, at a coffee shop or out in public)?**
- A. Yes. While staff members may not encourage a “yes” vote on school premises during the contract day, staff members and School Board members may certainly, in their personal capacity, engage in political activities as they wish.

Q. May staff write letters to the editor of newspapers?

A. Yes. You may always express your personal opinion on such matters as classroom space issues. While a staff member may identify himself or herself as a staff member of the school district, he or she should also make it clear that the letter expresses his or her own personal opinion. It should not be written on school district stationery. If it is communicated via e-mail, the district e-mail system should not be used, nor should it come from a school computer.

Q. May staff post signs in their yards?

A. Yes.

Q. May I make a financial contribution to and/or participate in events sponsored by the Citizen Committee supporting the bond issue?

A. Yes.

Q. May I volunteer to work on phone banks or go door-to-door with literature?

A. Yes, so long as the volunteer activity does not occur during your contract day.

Q. What can schools say in parent newsletters?

A. School newsletters, like the district newsletter from the DSC Communications Office, can provide information about the election such as where and when it is held, and can also provide factual financial data. The district will provide principals with information that they can insert in their newsletters.

Q. May employee organizations send a letter or postcard to parents urging “yes” votes?

A. Yes. Employee organizations are separate entities and may campaign for or against the bond issue election. Employee organizations may also donate money to a “yes” campaign. Again, no volunteer activity can occur during the contract day.