

## **School Board Candidates' Conflicts Of Interests**

Wednesday's Education Insider column correctly pointed out the conflict of interest involved in Board of Education candidates taking endorsements and campaign contributions from school district employees' unions. Subsequent negotiations with unions over salaries and benefits do indeed pose an enormous conflict, and violate public trust.

The key point I'm making here is that Jim Burgess, Luke Davis, and I declined to pursue union endorsement, campaign help, and money because the Westerville school board's Code of Ethics states that board members must "avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof". The union clearly has the right to engage in this practice, and will continue to do so as long as it remains profitable. The breach of ethics is on the part of the candidates who ignore the conflict, and run for office in violation of the public trust.

When we were asked by the union to interview, our first response was not to the union, but to the other five candidates who oppose us in the race. We pointed out the code provision and conflict. We asked them to join us in putting an end to this practice by not interviewing. All of our opponents refused, and pursued the union's endorsement.

Westerville is not the only school district in which a union is attempting to elect board members with whom they negotiate their contracts. A story looking into this practice, and comparing how politically active unions fare in negotiations versus non-active unions, may be enlightening reading for Central Ohio voters.

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Dispatch Article: <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2013/09/25/union-cant-back-incumbents-without-pact.html>