

PRESS RELEASE
October/28/2008

For Immediate Release
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Hopkinton Representative of the Chariho Regional School
Committee

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS SUPPORT OPEN NEGOTIATIONS

***Committee members from across the state support EP efforts of
transparency***

School Committee members across Rhode Island support the East Providence School Committee and its commitment to holding contract negotiation meetings open to the public. Currently, public sector contracts are negotiated behind closed doors. The public is denied the right to know how their money is being spent until the deal is signed and it's too late to change it.

The opponents of transparent negotiations claim that opening the process would stifle negotiations with 'onerous public input,' 'grandstanding' and 'political maneuvering'. However, Florida, Tennessee and Minnesota actually require open negotiations and they are all exhibiting positive results.

Hiding contract negotiations from public scrutiny is not required by law. Prior to each negotiation, the two parties establish ground rules. It is within these voluntary ground rules that the public loses their right to participate.

Chariho Regional School Committee member, Bill Felkner, having failed in the past to get his committee to support the change mustered quickly to the cause of the East Providence School committee and in the course of an hour yesterday had 8 other school committee members from across the state join him in endorsing open negotiations and decrying the old boy closed door attitudes of the past:

"Contract negotiations should move to the public realm. Absolutely."

"It's the people's contract and they have a right to have input on the final outcome."

"I do support holding the negotiations in public."

"It could very easily be done in a professional and productive manner."

"The public has a right to know what is on the table since it is their tax dollars involved."

"I would like to see all contract negotiations done in public."

"I think it would be quite beneficial for the people."

"Open meetings would provide transparency and equity to the process and in this funding environment, people need to know where their money is going."

Felkner said he is encouraged by the recent push for transparency, "Many times the school committee members themselves want to keep the public out, so this is certainly a positive sign. There really is no reason for this secrecy. If taxpayers had a say, I'm sure they would insist on open meetings."

The signed public school committee members below would like to request that open sessions be required for all public sector contract negotiations and express their support for the efforts taking place in East Providence. There are other committee members expressing support but did not respond in time to participate. Others wish to remain anonymous. The co-signers represent their own opinions and not that of the committees they serve. A copy of this

release will be sent to the RI Board of Regents.

Douglas Roth, North Kingstown
David Coughlin, Pawtucket
Renee Cockerill, North Kingstown
Sandra Gabaree, Johnston
Mark Baker, Gloucester
Jean Ann Guliano, East Greenwich
Paul Cannistra, Warwick
Joseph Quinn, Tiverton
Bill Felkner, Hopkinton/Chariho

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