

Remarks To Gilbert Public School District Governing Board Members From An Educate Gilbert Member 7/31/18

Last year after the walkout Superintendent McCord issued a memo asking employees not to wear Red For Ed shirts because it was a distraction and a violation of the dress code policy and potentially ARS 15-511.

Since then Red For Ed supporters spent the summer collecting signatures for the Invest In Education, a proposition on the November ballot. I think it has clearly been demonstrated that this group, which involves largely teachers, staff and even board members, is tied to a political cause.

Last year our schools bled red. Red For Ed has liaisons at each school and well-structured teams that have essentially been allowed to conduct their efforts freely in our schools which included walk-ins, a 6-day walkout without any consequences and wearing Red For Ed gear and shirts with slogans like “we are worth more.”

No one stopped them. Board Members--you are to blame for allowing the Red For Ed culture to develop, thrive and dominate our schools. Now it's time to take them back.

Regardless of where you stand on the issues, politics has no place in our schools. As we start the year and enter into a highly contentious political season, I remind you of ARS 15-511 and other policies that may be violated if this year looks anything like the last.

Our expectations of what will NOT be tolerated includes:

- No t-shirts with advertising or logos of any kind.
- While we can't prevent employees from wearing red on Wednesdays, if done in such solidarity or to a point it becomes excessive it may be perceived as a disruption to the school environment.
- No use of the gilbertschools.net email address or district technologies in any political efforts.
- No political propaganda on school campuses, websites or social media forums including PTSO pages.
- No use of school resources in political efforts including the facilities themselves. This may include organized walk-ins because if it allows individuals or groups to have a time or audience on school property it may be considered that the school is opening up a forum for that to occur.
- No personal items on school property that advertise a political effort in plain view of students or employees. Employees' personal vehicles may have bumper stickers but if it becomes excessive it can be perceived as a disruption to the school environment.
- No discrimination of employees, parents or their children because of their political views. Employees cannot use their position to influence others.

You can refer to the Arizona School Boards Association training last April titled *“Walkouts and Sick Outs: A Guide For Arizona School Leaders.”* A lawyer conducting the training made it clear that if any efforts are tied to a proposition on the ballot then the prohibitions of ARS 15-511 DO apply. This also includes Save Our Schools, which publicly opposes Prop 305.

What should be a united front to help solve our education crisis has turned into a political war and has created a division between parents, teachers and more. Our schools do not need to be political battlegrounds. Our students deserve an education that is not tainted by special interest groups, politics or school disruptions like walk-ins or walkouts.

As a parent, I should never have to be put in the position to report any violations by any educator, let alone my own child’s teacher. So I ask you to do what is supposed to be at the forefront of every decision you make—which is putting our students first.

Set the ground rules early for no politics in our schools by issuing a memo to all employees. However this time, I hope you will take a stronger stance.

As a member of Educate Gilbert-- we are launching a no politics in school campaign this week with ZERO tolerance for any violations.

Memos will go out to every district principal sharing these expectations.

Our website educates parents and others on the laws regarding politics in schools, what to watch out for and how to report violations.

Reports can be made anonymously online through our website.

We will track all reports which may be escalated to the board level and or the Attorney General and the Arizona Department of Education.

Please note that Red For Ed is encouraging educators to organize a school walk-in this week. Our eyes and ears are open and are everywhere. We will speak up loudly, publicly and will demand accountability.

These efforts are also to protect our teachers because not all of them support Red For Ed and have the right to a workplace that is free from politics, discomfort or discrimination.

Thanks for your time.