



April 2010

Re: School District Budgets, Board of Education elections and Contract Negotiations

As we enter the school district budget and election season, we are often asked 'what can a PTA do and what can't they do', and some are pressed for doing something that makes them uncomfortable.

Can a PTA support a school district budget?

The simply answer is YES! If the PTA has reviewed and discussed the impact of the budget and finds it to be educationally sound, they can vote to support the budget on that basis. In fact, the only time a PTA should ever take a position opposing a budget is if it is not educationally sound. That does not mean that one must be happy with every aspect of that district's budget. It means that overall you believe that the budget supports the educational needs of the students. The key to stating that the PTA supports the budget is that discussion and a vote to do so must have taken place. If you are unsure of what to do, it is better to take no position at all. We all know we face a tough budget season and a wise district will have meaningfully engaged its parents and community in the budget development process. If they do not engage the greater community, that is something you should also work toward changing.

Can PTA or PTA members support a candidate for school board election?

The answer is NO - the PTA as an association can never support a candidate (in any election not just school boards). Doing so violates our 501 (c)(3) status. As for an individual member, the answer is that in one's capacity as a PTA member or leader you also cannot support a candidate. So for example, we should never see a flier stating support for a candidate with the person listed as a PTA member or officer. (BTW, I have seen this and it is an egregious violation of our not-for-profit status, the guilty parties know who they are!).

Can PTA or PTA members take a position in teacher contract negotiations?

Again, the answer is NO for the same reasons that we cannot take a position on candidates. The "T" in PTA does not mean we advocate for teachers; it means parents and teachers work together to advocate for children! During protracted negotiations, PTAs are often asked to take sides. They may **never** do so. What they can do is ask that all parties negotiate in good faith to reach an agreement. No more than that!

**Final Note:**

As an individual and taxpayer in your community, you never give up your right to take a position, but in your official PTA capacity you may never do so with regard to candidates or negotiations. There is, however, a caution. When you are a PTA leader, even when you speak as an individual you are often perceived as the PTA leader so how the personal message is delivered is very important.

As always, if anyone has more specific concerns or questions, your Region Directors and Region boards are in place to provide you with the support you need. Not sure who that is or how to contact them? The following link will take you to an interactive map on our website. The counties are color coded showing the Region in which they belong and if you click on the region name, it will bring up the director's PTA email address.

<http://www.nyspta.org/contact/regionmap.cfm>

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