

## New School Board Structure Proposed to Orange Voters

FASA members, Orange County administrators need your help! If you're wondering why FASA's resources are needed in a local issue, I can assure you that our dilemma may be appearing soon at a school board near you.

Factions in Orange County became frustrated by their inability to influence seven independent (single district) school board members on such issues as impact fees and construction contracts, so they concocted this strategy to create a "mayor" of the school board. They pushed this as state-wide legislation, but when broad support crumbled in Tallahassee, they narrowed their sights on ballot language for Orange County alone. To enhance the "mayor's" powers, it was proposed to give the individual two votes. Can you imagine how Robert's Rules of Order will have to be re-written to accommodate this unique arrangement? If the un-empowered seven members vote 4-3 one way, the super powered mayor can reverse the vote by casting votes 8 and 9 the other way!

The voters in Orange County did not understand these nuances when proponents convinced 51,000 to place it on November's ballot. They were told it was their patriotic duty to create an elected school board chair that would stand up to the school system bureaucrats who were wasting their tax dollars. Forget that OCPS is an "A" rated school district (only urban district) by the Florida Department of Education and its business practices are recognized nationally as exemplary. Those facts were not mentioned by signature gatherers at local malls and hardware stores. Signees were only asked if they wanted the right to elect their school board chairman. What idiot wouldn't want that right? What they didn't know was that their school board chairman **was** elected by constituents in their district and chosen by his/her peers to serve a one year term.

OCPS asked that an independent group examine the proposal, along with exemplary models in Florida and across the nation. A Citizen's Stakeholders Committee was established, with representatives from a broad spectrum of our community. Civic organizations, chambers of commerce, universities, civil rights groups, teachers union, and school system employees were included. As president, I served as a representative for Orange County Association of School Administrators. The group was ably chaired by Fran Pignone, a well respected community leader well versed in local and state politics.

Throughout the spring, the committee heard from a wide variety of experts on Florida constitutional law, legislation, civil rights and best practices in Florida and the nation. It concluded unanimously that the proposed model would be detrimental to sound organizational practices and would have no positive impact on student achievement. The proceedings, evidence, findings, and recommendations can be reviewed through the following link:

<https://www.ocps.net/sb/Pages/GovernanceStudyCommittee.aspx>

Please help us stand up to special interest groups masquerading as patriots (Let Us vote???...come on!), who have convinced unwitting voters to fix something that is not broken. While there is room for improvement in our local educational system and across Florida, the effort to inject more politics into our school board will not solve anything. If you don't want to

see it spread to your school district, help us stop it in Orange. To see how you can help, please visit Just Vote No! at: <http://www.nolectedchair.com/>

Joe McCoy, Past President, Orange County Association of School Administrators.