

To: Board of Education, San Diego Unified School District
From: Norma Damashek, Co-President
League of Women Voters of San Diego (LWVSD)
Date: October 14, 2008
Re: Board Governance Policies

The School Board Governance Policies received inadequate public exposure before they were adopted by the Board on September 9, 2008 - and a good deal of criticism since that time.

Because education for San Diego's children is of highest priority to the League of Women Voters, we are urging you to rescind your Governance Policies and start afresh with greater public input.

This policy document would benefit from more work. We suggest that it be rewritten with more objective and business-like standards. Excessive jargon and scolding undertones should be removed. Legally unenforceable prohibitions should be deleted, along with those measures that undercut School Board bylaws and short-circuit transparency and accountability in public meetings.

We will be brief with some general observations:

The bylaws of the Board of Education adequately and legally define the way Board and District business is to be conducted. This means that the Board already has written guidelines and rules governing voting, communications, the formation of committees, the roles and duties of Board members, your relationship to the Superintendent, and so on.

For example, Section 1010 of the bylaws states: "The authority of the Board may only be exercised as a Board and only at (public) meetings or closed sessions as duly and legally constituted. Individual members including Board Officers acting in their individual capacities have no authority to commit the Board or Superintendent to any policy determination or course of action."

Furthermore, Section 1013 instructs you to use Robert's Rules of Order for running Board meetings. If the School Board has chronic problems conducting well-run meetings, a good and simple remedy would be to engage the services of a professional parliamentarian at Board meetings.

In other words, auxiliary policies for Board conduct should be limited to reinforcing the bylaws and should not propose the type of rules found

under the heading "Governing Commitments," many of which are not only unenforceable but, if truth be told, tend to diminish and degrade the dignity and integrity of this elected body and deprive the community of a public airing of issues by our elected representatives.

We will end our comments on an entirely different level. What strikes us as a fundamental problem, far exceeding rules of Board conduct, is the Board's *Mega Result/Mission* that says, "All students will graduate with the skills, motivation, curiosity and resilience to succeed in their choice of college and career in order to lead and participate in the society of tomorrow."

Our concern is that rhetoric about the Board's mission that singles out college and career while ignoring vocational education and alternative options will inevitably disenfranchise more than half of our students and risk making failure a permanent reality in our school system.

We would all benefit from less focus on the behavior of elected officials and greater focus on the basic goal of our public school system -- to ensure realistic educational opportunities for all of our children.