



## Teachers union sentiments play role in school election

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A widely circulated You Tube video asserts that electing Margaret "Peggy" Babcock and Richard Bokor to the Palatine Township Elementary District 15 school board would be tantamount to handing its control to the teachers union.

On the eve of contract talks between a financially strapped district and the Classroom Teachers' Council, that could be unsettling to those who worry teacher pay is too generous for taxpayers to afford.

The video's assertion is also completely unfounded, say Babcock and Bokor, who are running as a team.

"Anyone who knows me knows I do what's best for the community," Bokor said. "I don't live in Camelot. My 401k and property value have gone down, too."

Also running for four open seats are incumbents Nancy Carlson and Tim Millar and challengers Mark Bloom, Steven Miller, Matthew Taylor and Vicki Wilson.

And while the anonymous video suggests otherwise, Bokor and Babcock say there's no way they'd support a tax increase referendum in this economic climate.

Bokor retired in 2003 after 34 years teaching in District 15 and Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211. In 2007, he ran for a seat with current board members Gerald Chapman, the former District 211 superintendent, and James Ekeberg.

In that race, the union gave about \$8,000 of in-kind contributions to the trio's campaign, which Babcock worked on.

Bokor said he won't accept any donations from employee groups this time, though his and Babcock's committee, VisionForD15, did accept \$537 leftover from 2007.

"But just because a union supports you financially or with an endorsement, doesn't mean you're indebted to them," Babcock said.

Critics also point to Bokor's recent endorsement by the Northwest Suburban Labor Activists, comprised of various labor unions. The backing doesn't come with financial support and Bokor said it was unsolicited. But it's not a surprise, given he's the only educator among the candidates.

The CTC hasn't endorsed or contributed to any candidates this time.

Bokor said the economy's downturn will make these upcoming talks much different. Many of the players will be different since two board members didn't seek re-election, and Superintendent Dan Lukich and several top administrators are new.

In 2006, teachers worked without a contract for weeks and threatened to strike.

Wilson, a stay-at-home mom and PTA member, said it would be "an amazing act of good faith (for the union) to take strike off the table" and that the past strike threat was traumatic for the community.

As a police officer, Taylor is experienced with unions and said the CTC shouldn't waste time with "throwaway ideas."

Millar and Carlson said they were open and honest during the 2006 process. Millar said the board's recent offer to start negotiating the new contract was declined. The union, which he said has many new leaders, has filed more grievances than past groups.

"They don't seem to be as willing to work with administration to solve issues," Millar said. "I hope that changes."

CTC President Lisa Nuss acknowledged the increase and said the union hasn't been able to resolve as many issues after the "significant change in district leadership."

All candidates say teachers should accept the fiscal reality.

"This can't be like in the past with 6 or 7 percent increases," said Miller, adding there doesn't need to be a three-year pact. "The taxpayers don't have anything more to give."

Nuss said there are many non-monetary issues to discuss and that "we're looking to bargain in good faith toward a fair and equitable solution before the contract's expiration" on Aug. 31.

Some candidates suggested the district and union issue joint statements on progress being made. Bloom said the process should only be made public if actions, such as filing an intention to strike, indicate failing negotiations.