

PR Plan for a School Board Recall Campaign

Tips:

1. Do not take the lead on a school board recall campaign. Let a community person chair the campaign committee which should be made up primarily of community members. Otherwise, we look self-serving.
2. Help the community committee establish a public relations/communications strategy.
3. A school board recall campaign should be part of a larger strategy, not just a reaction to an issue.
4. Provide the committee with information about your membership, the association's relationship with individual board members, and school board members' behavior at board meetings or at the bargaining table.
5. Make sure your members are kept notified of the association's involvement in the campaign and what they can do to help behind the scenes.
6. Establish a behind-the-scenes association committee that's a coalition of EA and ESP members.
7. While you may believe that the board is wrong when it comes to issues of privatization or bargaining, consider carefully whether that opinion is shared by others before you begin a board recall.
8. A school board recall campaign is a last-ditch effort after all other strategies have been tried and were not successful.
9. Involve MEA in your behind-the-scenes involvement. We can provide support to your members and the community committee.
10. Be proactive instead of reactive. Get involved in electing board members who are friends of education.
11. Plan ahead. What's your strategy if your recall campaign is unsuccessful?
12. Know who the various audiences are and what message will appeal to them. The key question is—How have the board actions negatively impacted this audience?
13. Do not take the lead on a school board recall campaign. Let a community person chair the campaign committee which should be made up primarily of community members. Otherwise, we look self-serving

Letters to the Editor

1. Use the message and talking points as the basis for a letter to the editor.
2. Keep letters simple and short. Don't try to cover all the talking points in one letter.
3. Don't include too many numbers or facts in a letter.
4. Send only one or two letters at a time. When the newspaper is flooded with letters, they become suspicious and may not print any of them.
5. Know what the Letters to the Editor policy is for each newspaper.

Samples:

Outsourcing

Dear Editor;

_____ has decided to ignore the wishes of the community and vote to outsource the jobs of school employees. He/she is not fit to be a school board member and should be recalled.

The voters of this community spoke loud and clear at board meetings but our opinions fell on deaf ears. As a matter of fact, _____ rudely stopped discussion on the issue and stated that the issue was a school issue and not a community issue. Our taxes support the school system and as community members and voters, this is our issue.

I urge all voters to support the current recall campaign. It's time we took back our control over what happens to our children when they're at school.

Letter to Frequent Voters

1. This group is an important audience because a successful recall depends on their vote.
2. Make sure you have the three-year history of the community's voting record and who has voted in those elections.
3. Find out which Association members are on those lists. Know how they stand on this issue.
4. Association members who live and vote in the community should be tapped to work with the community recall committee.
5. Follow up the letter with a personal phone call or visit.

Dear Voter;

You are an asset to this community by your regular participation in the voting process. With your vote, you have helped to make to make this community and our school district a success. Your vote is needed again to continue our community's tradition of making sure the democratic process is honored.

We're asking for your support in voting to recall _____ in the upcoming school board recall election. _____'s actions have shown that he/she has no regard for this community.

By deciding to _____, he/she has put our children, this community and the school district in jeopardy. Despite the presentation of facts and data, the impassioned pleas of community members and protests by voters, _____ voted to _____.

As voters and taxpayers in this community, we can't allow this behavior to continue.

We are asking that you join us by voting "yes" to recall _____ in the May 2 school board recall election. By doing so, you join many in the community who want their voices heard and want to take back control of their schools.

You can also show your support by joining the "It's Our Schools!" campaign which is working hard to bring democracy back to the school board. Contact _____ if you can help.

Thank your for your support.

Script for Petition Circulators

1. Keep the script short, clear and to the point.
2. Remind circulators not to enter into a debate or argument with potential signers.
3. Take "no" for an answer if an individual doesn't want to sign the petition. Thank them for their time and move on.
4. Make sure circulators know the rules for getting signatures.
5. Equip each circulator with enough petitions, pens and clipboards.
6. Community events, school sporting events, grocery stores and malls are good places to collect signatures. Make sure you know the rules of the location and have the permission of the person in charge.

Sample:

"Hello! Are you a registered voter in _____?"

If the answer is "yes," continue.

"My name is _____ and I'm a member and voter in the _____ community too. I'm working for the _____ Committee to recall _____, a school board member who doesn't represent the best interest of our community, our school district or our children.

I'd like you sign our petition to send the message that we want a part in the decisions made in our school district that affect our children and this community.

By signing this petition, you'll support the recall of school board member _____ who voted to _____ against the wishes of voters and taxpayers in this community.

Will you please sign the petition? Thank your for your support."

PR Samples

Information for Harrison Recall postcards:

1. Thank you for supporting the school board recall election.
2. Vote yes to recall:

David Rowe
RayeLynn Walraven
Karen Zaborowski
3. Election Date is May 6, 2008
4. Issues for recalling these individuals:
 - a. Invested tax payer dollars to build a new road and maintenance building instead of investing in students' education.
 - b. Outsourcing jobs to "for-profit" companies, moving tax payer money out of town, out of state and out of the country.

MEAP errors?

Flint Journal Oct 31, 2007

The Article quotes Martin Ackley from the Department of Education, as stating that the district self reported that a teacher had: (1) left the room during the test and (2) read portions of the test to students rather than using the self-paced CD provided by the state. The consequence was the students had to be retested at a cost of \$900.

Gardella was quoted as saying the most serious allegations focused on one teacher. That teacher has been placed on administrative leave pending possible disciplinary action.

Now: The Rest of the Story

The Special Education teacher placed on leave is a 35+ year exemplary teacher in the Lakeville Community Schools.

The accused teacher DID NOT at any time leave her classroom during the test. Nor did she leave her students unsupervised. She did read portions of the test to students (4) when the CD and or computer she was using began to malfunction. *She did not know* that if she read the test, it had to be done individually.

a directive One other teacher also read portions of the test in small groups. However, she had been given *permission from the Building Principal* to do so! Yet, only one teacher has been singled out for possible disciplinary action.

Lakeville Education Association (LEA) representatives have contacted the Department of Education, MEAP Administration Manager, James Griffiths. Mr. Griffiths states:

(1). Districts are required to train all staff on assessment and administration procedures. This includes teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals. The requirement is there to minimize the possibility of this kind of error.

NO Training was provided to staff.

(2). Districts are expected to completely investigate any possible deviations and provide a self-report to the MDE. It was confirmed that Mr. Gardella conducted his investigation and reported that: (1) a teacher had left her room unsupervised during the test and (2) a teacher had read portions of the test rather than use the CD.

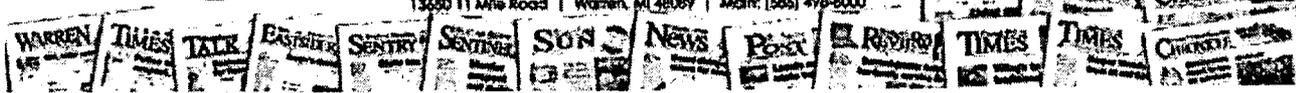
Mr. Gardella provided inaccurate information to MDE in that the teacher did not leave her room and he provided incomplete information in that more than one teacher was involved in reading the test.

Mr Griffiths states The MDE does not assess fines or penalties against the district for failure to provide required training to staff. Rather the MDE relies on the fact that districts understand that they will bare the cost of retests if the errors are made due to lack of staff training.

It is clear to the LEA that the error of reading the test was the result of the districts failure to provide training to staff. Neither the teachers nor the Building Principal knew that it had to be done on an individual basis. An error was made and has been corrected per MDE instructions. There is more than enough responsibility for the error to be shared by staff and administration. Rather than singling out one teacher and placing all the blame on her shouldn't we all learn from this mistake and ensure that all staff are thoroughly trained in the future?

The LEA is asking for your support. We ask that you call Board members and attend the next Board meeting. Ask the Board to return the teacher to her classroom, clear her exemplary record, and direct administration to provide proper training for all staff in the future. Or, if discipline is to be issued demand that all parties from the Superintendent down, be given the same discipline.

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Union leadership embarks on school board recall campaign

By Jennie Miller
 C & G Staff Writer

SOUTHFIELD — After a controversial decision to privatize transportation, custodial and food service employment in the Southfield Public Schools, four members of the Board of Education who voted in favor of the proposal are now facing a recall campaign from local union leaders.

“We were extremely disappointed in the (April 22) decision,” said Patricia Haynie, executive director of the Southfield Coordinating Council of the Michigan Education Association, comprised of three bargaining units, one being the Michigan Educational Support Personnel Association, which includes the 300 individuals who worked for Southfield Schools and who were given pink slips this spring.

School Board President Karen Miller and trustees Margaret Hall, Fern Katz and Darryle Buchanan were listed in the recall petition filed last week with the Election’s Division of the Oakland County Clerk’s Office. The term of Board Vice President Connie Williams, who also voted in favor of privatization, is up this fall.

Haynie argued that the decision was not just about money, with the school board aiming to eradicate its \$7 million deficit.

“This is more than just a financial issue,” she said. “It’s an issue of social justice. The need for this community to stand up and support working men and women and the right for working men and women to earn a decent wage and have decent working conditions. It’s a human rights issue, it’s not just an economic issue.”

The district voted in favor of outsourcing those jobs, despite last-minute negotiation efforts from the union in an attempt to thwart the plans.

“I had people who only needed six months to get a retirement package and they basically cut off their heads,” Haynie said, adding that more than 100 of those laid off live in either Southfield or Lathrup Village. She said many are now in danger of losing their homes. “Under the state law, if you work in a school district, your children can go to that school district. Now there are 67 students who can no longer attend Southfield Schools,” and for whom the district cannot acquire the per-pupil tax dollars, she added.

Haynie and her team have 90 days to acquire enough signatures to put the matter on the Nov. 4 ballot. The number of signatures is dependant on the number of voters who participated in the last gubernatorial election, although Haynie said they’re aiming for 15,000, well above that figure.

VE

Local Jobs Hiring
 \$12-\$18 /Hr + Benefits,
 Hiring Now, Apply Within...
WorkLocalJobs.com

MLive.com HS Sports
 High School Sports,
 Standings and Results.
 Complete Game
 Coverage.
MLive.com

Center for Union Facts
 Facts That Union Leaders
 Don't Want You To Know.
www.UnionFacts.com

School Jobs
 50k-80k Salary Jobs. Find
 Local Jobs.Listings Free!
Better-Jobs-Now.com

The Burke Group
 Full Service Int'l Labor
 Relations Consultants to
 Management
www.tbglabor.com/

Pre-Election Procedures for Recall Elections

Petition Forms

- ✓ Must meet size and printing requirements required by MCL 168.544c
- ✓ Must be 8 ½ inches by 4 inches in size
- ✓ The words “recall petition” must be printed in 24 point boldface type across the top of the petition
- ✓ Samples of the petition form may be obtained from the office of the county clerk

Reasons for Recall

Article II, Section 8 of the Michigan Constitution specifically states:

The sufficiency or any statement of reasons or grounds procedurally Required shall be a political rather than a judicial question.

Thus the reasons for a recall shall be a political question, so the courts cannot set aside a recall on the grounds that the reasons for it are in some way inadequate.

Reasons for recall are not limited to misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance in office or whether the reasons stated are even truthful. A school board member may be recalled simply based on a position taken or a vote cast in the course of fulfilling his or her official duties.

Term Requirements and Limitations – Recall petition cannot refer to a public officials’ conduct that occurred prior to his or her last election.

A board member cannot be recalled in the first six (6) months of his or her term or in the last six (6) months of his or her term.

Clarity Hearing

Before being circulated, a petition for recall of a school board member must be submitted to the board of county election commissioners of the county in which the school board member whose recall is sought resides.

Board of County Election Commissioners is comprised of:

County Clerk
County Treasurer
Probate Judge

Determines whether the reasons for recall stated in the petition are sufficiently clear to identify the conduct that is the basis for the recall.

Reasons must be clear to (1) citizens being asked to sign the petition; (2) the voters who must decide for or against the recall at the election if enough signatures are collected; and (3) the board member named in the petition, so that he or she may defend against the recall and explain to citizens why they should not sign the petitions and why they should vote against the recall.

Within 24 hours after the petition is submitted to the board of county election commissioners, they must notify the school board member whose recall is being sought of the reasons stated in the petition and the date on which the board will meet to consider the reasons.

The board of county election commissioners must make an official declaration of the sufficiency or insufficiency of the petition within 35 days after the filing of the petition.

Determining Clarity – Certain guidelines for assessment of “clearly state reasons” in a recall petition have been set forth judicially.

- ✓ A reason is sufficiently clear when it is a specific allegation of facts, which may or may not be true.
- ✓ A reason is not insufficient because it does not allege the time and occasion involved.
- ✓ A reason does not require a meticulous and technical detailed statement of the charges.

Appeals

Who may appeal the determination of the board of county election commissioners?

- ✓ The School Board Member whose recall is being sought
- ✓ The sponsors of the recall petition

Appeal must be filed with the circuit court not more than 10 days after the commissioners make their decision.

Petition Signatures

Number of Signatures needed: Michigan Election Code requires recall petitions to be signed by a number of qualified voters **not less than 25 percent** of the total number of voters within the school district who voted in the most recent gubernatorial election.

County clerk determines the number of signatures needed for a recall petition drive. Upon written demand of a petitioner, the clerk has five (5) days in which to certify the minimum number of signatures needed.

Who can sign a recall petition?

Only “qualified” electors may sign a recall petition. (a qualified elector is a person who is a registered voter)

Recall petitions must be circulated according to township or city designated in the heading of the petition.

Each person signing a recall petition must personally affix his or her signature, address and the date of signing.

Petition Circulators

- ✓ Must be registered to vote in Michigan
- ✓ All signatures on a recall petition must be signed in the presence of the circulator
- ✓ Circulator must sign the circulator’s certificate on the petition
- ✓ A circulator may not obtain signatures through fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation

Circulator’s Certificate

The circulator must sign and date the petition as circulator. The circulator’s signature must be dated after the dates of the electors who signed the petitions, otherwise the signatures are invalid.

Filing Procedures

Filing with the County Clerk – Must be filed with the clerk of the county where the largest portion of the registered voters of the school district resides.

The county clerk must provide a receipt to the person filing the recall petitions. The receipt must show the date of the filing, the number of petition sheets filed for each school board member sought to be recalled, and the number of signatures claimed by the petitioner for each board member sought to be recalled.

At this point the filing of a recall petition is complete.

Checking Procedure

Determination of Compliance by County Clerk

Must determine within seven (7) days after the filing of recall petitions whether the form of the petition is proper and whether the number of signatures on the petition is sufficient to meet the minimum required by law.

Cannot count signatures if one or more of the following apply:

- 1) The execution of the certificate of circulator is not in compliance with election law requirements.

- 2) The heading of the petition is improperly completed.
- 3) The reasons for recall are different than those determined to be sufficiently clear by the board of county election commissioners.
- 4) Signatures were obtained before the date of determination by the board of county election commissioners.
- 5) Signatures are not dated.
- 6) Signatures were obtained more than 90 days before the filing of the petition.

The inclusion of an invalid signature on a petition sheet does not make the remaining signatures invalid.

A petition is valid for only 180 days following the determination of clarity by the board of county election commissioners or court of proper jurisdiction.

The county clerk must give written notice to the person or organization filing the recall petitions if any of the petitions are found to be insufficient. If found to be sufficient and in proper form, the petitions are sent to the clerk of each township or city named in the heading for a registration check.

Registration Check by Township or City Clerk – The clerk of the respective township or city has 15 days to make a registration check, which is done by comparing the names on the petitions with the voter registration records.

After completing the check, attaches the certificate to the petitions that indicate the number of signers on each petition sheet who are registered electors in the particular township or city named in the petition heading and in the school district. Petitions are returned to the county clerk.

Challenges

A school board member named in a recall petition has 30 calendar days in which to make a challenge of a signature or the registration of a person whose name appears on the recall petition. Challenger must identify in writing each challenged signature.

Final Determination

Decision must be made within 35 days after the filing of the recall petition

RECALL ELECTIONS

The Right of Recall

Michigan voters have a fundamental right reserved by the State Constitution, Article II, Section 8, to recall "elective" public officials from office. The recall process applies to all public officers elected by the people, except judges.

Advocates of recall generally believe that the people should have the power to remove an elected official from office before the end of his or her term. Recall elections give voters a method of removing an official they no longer want, regardless of whether that official is carrying out his or her duties in a responsible manner. If the voters become dissatisfied with the actions of an incumbent, they can vote to recall the official without having to wait until he or she is up for reelection.

Overview of the Recall Process

1. A person or group of people decides that the conduct or decision of a school board member merits recalling the official during his or her term of office.
2. The person or group of people must then follow the requirements of MCL 168.952(1) and (2), which first require the submission of the reason(s) for the recall to the board of county election commissioners.
3. County Election Commission must determine whether each reason for recall stated in the petition is of sufficient clarity to enable the named board member and community citizens to identify the course of conduct that is the basis of recall.
4. Circulate petitions.
5. Filing officials check to see that petitions are in proper form and if the number of signatures collected is sufficient.
6. School board member named in petition may challenge signatures.
7. If enough valid signatures are collected, a recall election is then held.
8. Clerk is required to schedule a special recall election on the next regular election date that is not less than 70 days after the date the recall petition was filed.

Things to Consider

A board member cannot be recalled in the first six (6) months of their term or in the last six (6) months of their term.

A board member being recalled will continue to serve until the results of the recall election is certified.

A plan to recall board members should be a part of a larger strategy rather than a reaction to an issue.

Before considering recalling a board member, inform community members of board actions and their votes on all issues. Is the board member making bad decisions that negatively impact the community? (Find out if community members feel that the board member is making bad decisions.)

Develop a Plan for the Recall Election

Form a coalition with credible community members and get commitments of support.

Determine if you want to run a stealth election plan or a full campaign.

Prepare a Plan developed by the community action group that includes:

1. Timelines
2. PR strategy
 - a. Develop a message
 - b. Plan for letters to the editor
 - c. Campaign flyers, yard signs, etc
 - d. Letters to frequent voters
 - e. Make sure you have the facts, so you can respond to editorials, letters and voters
 - f. Community forums
 - g. Plan for phone banks and GOTV
 - i. Prepare scripts for petition circulators
 - ii. Prepare scripts for phone banks
3. Budget
4. Education around the petition drive
 - a. Approval by the County Election Commission
 - b. Requirements for signing and circulating petitions
 - c. Verification of petitions by County clerk
5. Qualified Voter File (QVF)
 - a. Make a FOIA request for the QVF
 - b. Identify positive voters
 - c. Request MEA membership lists
6. Contact absentee voters
7. Keep stakeholders and coalition members informed