

School Board Breaks Apart Richland

Richland and Haycock Formally Oppose

At the August meeting of our School Board, the Board voted 6-1 to break apart Richland Township in a re-apportionment plan for school board representation. Voting District 3 in Richland will now be part of School Region 3 (Quakertown Borough). Currently, the School District is divided into three voting regions that elect three school directors each for a board of nine directors. Region One, which includes Richland Township, Haycock Township and Richlandtown Borough, has roughly 45% of the population but only 33% of the representation. By law, representation must be roughly equal.

The Richland Township Board of Supervisors, along with the Haycock Township Board of Supervisors, passed resolutions supporting an alternative plan to elect all directors "at large." The resolutions, along with a citizen petition of over 1,200 signers, will be filed in Bucks County court. Haycock has contributed to the filing.

With "at large," all voters get to vote for all directors in each election. In addition, candidates are no longer confined to a region - "at large" opens up the whole district for anyone who wants to run for school board. Depending on who runs, "at large" could pit a superior candidate who lives across the school district against an

inferior candidate who lives across the street. Under regions, voters could only vote for the candidate who lived across the street.

Directors Manuel Alphonse from Region 2, and Paul Stepanoff (Region 1) support "at large." All the other School Directors, including Region 1 Directors Robert Leight and Zane Stauffer, both Richland Township residents, prefer the present regional system.

There is a practical and adverse effect of breaking apart Richland Township District 3. Local party caucuses greatly influence the election and endorsement of school board candidates. Region 3 will have 12 caucus votes, of which 10 will come from Quakertown and two from Richland. Should a Richland District 3 (the northwest section of the township) resident seek the office of school director, there will be a 5-1 bias against Richland in party caucus support. This places about 25% of the residents of Richland Township at a severe electoral disadvantage regarding school board elections and issues.

Therefore, the Richland Board of Supervisors felt compelled to act in the interest of its citizens and its parents. "At Large" eliminates the caucus disadvantage and other weaknesses of the regional system.