

CCPTA QUESTIONNAIRE--ARLINGTON COUNTY BOARD SPECIAL ELECTION, TUESDAY APRIL 8

CANDIDATE: John Vihstadt (www.VoteForVihstadt.com; 703-237-6734)

I am writing on behalf of the board of the Arlington County Council of PTAs (CCPTA). We invite you to send us a written statement for our constituents, which as you know are the PTAs of Arlington Public Schools. We will in turn distribute your written statement to all Arlington PTAs. Thus we suggest the following guidelines for your statement:

I want to recap my record of schools leadership, and summarize the challenges we face in ensuring that our schools continue to progress towards excellence for all children. This excellence will be threatened if we do not make the right decisions about where to spend and invest. In fact, the future of our schools is a main reason that I am running for County Board.

Limited resources require tough choices. I will work to end the annual budget uncertainty that besets our schools, while prioritizing funding for education and other core services instead of squandering funds on grandiose projects like the streetcar.

My wife Mary and I moved to Arlington in 1981, and raised two boys through Tuckahoe Elementary, Swanson Middle and Yorktown High School, where Mary served as PTA president at each school.

My lengthy and substantial record of service far eclipses that of all other candidates combined. Highlights include:

- *Co-chairing the 2002 School Bond for **Kenmore Middle School** and **Glebe Elementary**;*
- *Advocating before the School Board and County Board to secure the 2005 addition to **Swanson Middle School**;*
- *Leading coalitions and advocating before the School Board and County Board to secure the rebuilding of **Yorktown High School**;*
- *Leading coalitions and advocating before the School Board and County Board to accelerate the rebuilding of **Wakefield High School**;*
- *Yorktown High School PTA President;*
- *APS Honored Citizen Award;*
- *Secretary & Vice President, County Council of PTAs;*
- *Schools Committee, Arlington Civic Federation.*

I approached these leadership positions in a bridge-building fashion, and have demonstrated I will be able to continue to work constructively with all stakeholders.

My Independent candidacy has been endorsed by many current and former School Board and County Board members, both Democrats and Republicans, including, Libby Garvey, David Foster, Todd McCracken, and Frank Wilson. Former County Council of PTAs presidents Dale Proctor, Cecelia Espenosa, Anne Reynolds and Jane Shepard are also supporting me.

1. Outline your proposed policies and priorities for Arlington Public Schools, and the timeline you see as realistic for these priorities.

Although I am not running for School Board, my deep record of schools and community involvement will allow me to hit the ground running in helping the School Board to implement its policies and priorities.

Specifically,

- *The School Board and County Board must immediately improve their working relationship by instituting regular work sessions at both the Board and staff level.*
- *We must deal with our schools capacity crisis by (a) ensuring that the schools have the financial resources needed through restoration of a predictable funding stream and (b) working in a cross-cutting fashion to identify available land and facilities for new schools, additions to schools, re-purposing of facilities for educational use and through other creative devices. There may be areas where schools and County facilities can be co-located or combined for both cost savings and beneficial synergies.*
- *The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) processes for both the County and APS must be integrated from the onset of the biennial process.*

2. Address what you see as the balance of county and school priorities within Arlington -- for example, funding and physical plant.

While we have two independently elected bodies, the County Board and the School Board, the County Board has the taxing authority and controls the purse strings for spending on our schools. The formal Revenue-Sharing Agreement between APS and the County should be reinstated and the funding formula adjusted to ensure that such County-driven devices as tax-increment financing (TIF) do not adversely impact schools funding.

Fiscal accountability demands that we review the capital needs of the County and APS in a holistic, coordinated and long-range manner so that educational needs are not pitted against other community goals when it comes time to size and place bonds on the ballot.

3. Finally, what is your vision for the future of Arlington's schools? For example, do you foresee greater collaboration with GMU & NOVA, more utilization of the Career Center, building more schools, etc.

Public schools, public safety, infrastructure maintenance and neighborhood quality of life will be my top priorities on the County Board.

Arlington's current educational advantage is not guaranteed. Solutions to budget gaps that are likely to harm the quality of our education such as larger class sizes, elimination of "choice" programs, trims to employee compensation and benefits and other devices to cope with both

enrollment increases and resources constriction are all, unfortunately, on the table. I will work collaboratively to ensure that our schools have the resources and support from our County Board that they need to meet our expectations and the diverse needs of our children in a competitive global economy.