

Playing with "P.T.A."

Posted by the Asbury Park Press on 04/26/06

The three newly elected Barnegat Board of Education members who used the initials "P.T.A." prominently on a campaign flier **harmed their own credibility** by **leading voters to believe** they were supported by parent-teacher groups.

The elected team — Scott Sarno, Robert **Houser** and Elaine **Taylor** — denied the accusations lodged by two elementary school PTA presidents. Sarno said, "If you read the whole thing, it's clear who sent it."

C'mon. Not until the bottom of the flier is it noted that it stands for "Parents Taking Action," and that the slogan was paid for by the team's campaign: "Committee for Lower Taxes-Higher Education." The high placement of those three particular letters, separated by periods to keep within election law guidelines, was an **obvious attempt** to give voters the impression these people were aligned with the PTAs.

The PTA presidents accused the Sarno-Houser-Taylor team of intentionally misleading voters with the fliers — distributed door-to-door on election day — that gave the appearance of PTA endorsements. The fliers featured a prominent **"Get the Facts" logo** followed by **"A Note from the Desk of your P.T.A. committee."**

"Many parents trust the PTAs in our schools," said one PTA member, adding that such moves compromise the public trust. Other PTA leaders said they were contacted by many parents confused by the fliers. Harry Capers, president of the New Jersey Parent/Teacher Association, compared it to someone selling counterfeit cigarettes in a box identical to a brand name, but spelling that name wrong. Good analogy.

Most time-constrained voters won't take the time to analyze committee names at the bottom of fliers on election day. PTAs — there to advocate for children, not elections — are not permitted to make endorsements. Ocean County and regional PTA officials are reviewing the matter.

The three board members' ethics are in doubt. Voters should closely watch their actions on the board and keep their last-minute tactics in mind when they're up for re-election.

Copyright © 2006 Asbury Park Press. All rights reserved.

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service and Privacy Policy](#). (Updated June 7, 2005) Copyright © 2006 Asbury Park Press. All rights reserved.

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service and Privacy Policy](#). (Updated June 7, 2005) Site design by [Asbury Park Press / Contact us](#)