



May 5, 2009

Hon. Darrell Steinberg, Chair
Senate Rules Committee
State Capitol, Room 400
Sacramento, CA 95814

ORANGE COUNTY
ASIAN AND
PACIFIC ISLANDER
COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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Dear Senator Steinberg:

Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA), the largest Asian and Pacific Islander civil rights organization in the county, must respectfully oppose the nomination of Rae Belisle and Jorge Lopez as members of the California State Board of Education. Orange County is the home of over 16 per cents APIs. OCAPICA has developed a strong record of support for immigrant and first generation minority students including creating multicultural curricula such as the country's first Vietnamese American 7-12 curriculum.

Ms. Belisle has a dedicated history of state service which has included work in the state legislature, the State Board of Education and the Sacramento County Office of Education. However, it is her role as Chief Counsel and Executive Director to the State Board of Education over a period of seven years from 1997 to 2004 that gives OCAPICA its greatest concern.

Her track record on policies related to English learners has been to consistently support a "one size fits all" approach. This is particularly true in the area of textbook adoptions, statewide testing policies, and professional development for teachers and administrators. As a result, textbooks have failed to meet the needs of the majority of English learners. Additionally, professional development related to these standards-aligned texts has been inadequately focused on the specific needs of EL students. As a result of the policies supported by Ms. Belisle, EL students and teachers with large numbers of EL students have been denied access to the most appropriate and effective instruction and curriculum.

Additionally, Ms. Belisle has consistently supported the promulgation of Title V Administrative Regulations that undermined the rights of parents to choose the best education for their children and restrict the rights they have at the local level. During her tenure as the SBE Legal Counsel, Title V Regulations on the "waiver provision" of Prop 227 were issued. Her legal advice resulted in litigation and a policy reversal by legislature pertaining to Reading First regulations that prohibited bilingual classrooms or schools with one or more bilingual classrooms from eligibility for receiving Reading First funds. In the view of Los Amigos, this narrow view of the law resulted in countless parents of EL students being denied a greater number of educational options for their children.

Again, while we appreciate Ms. Belisle's support for public education and her years of public service, we must oppose her appointment to a four-year term on the State Board of Education due to her past track record, which has not advanced the status of English Learners in California.

We are also very concerned about Mr. Lopez' track record of not supporting multicultural education. He is a staunch and rigid practitioner of a very narrow curriculum that focuses on what is tested only. He has stated that those who support multicultural education need not apply at his school. Additionally, his remarks that Free and Reduced lunches are unnecessary because too many low income children are obese reflect a shallow understanding of nutrition and poverty. This disturbs us greatly and we therefore urge you to oppose his nomination as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns over this important appointment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Anne Foo".

Mary Anne Foo

Executive Director

Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance