

Gold
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"an administrative oversight" and said that Nelligan's outburst was in poor taste, Nelligan shouted, "Is it in poor taste to expose a violation?"

In a letter to the state Ethics Commission January 11, Gold wrote that she was contacting the commission "on behalf of the Lake-Lehman Taxpayers' Association" because Whipple hadn't filed the form with the district as of that date.

She also sent a copy of the letter to the attorney general's office.

The board had appointed Whipple December 7 to replace Dr. Martin McMahon, who had resigned after Gold challenged his eligibility to serve on the school board after he moved from Region III, where he had been elected, to Region II.

"There's no substance to this," added board member Dr. John Presper. "It was an administrative oversight which has been blown out of proportion to make it look like an ethics violation. If you have a problem, contact the Ethics Commission. What's the point of beating on us, harping on it and jumping up and down?"

Board member Thomas Williams said that this has happened before. Board members simply completed the form and served, with no problems.

District solicitor Peter Savage had advised Whipple to abstain from voting on any business during the following school board meeting, until he could contact the state Ethics Commission on the matter.

"This could be called a technical violation, but there isn't any evidence of intentional wrongdoing," he said January 17, after speaking with the Ethics Commission's chief legal counsel.

"As far as I'm concerned, Mrs. Whipple didn't do anything wrong and may vote on school board issues, starting with the February meeting."

Savage cited a similar Ethics Commission case in which two township officials had forgotten to file financial statements for eight years. When the commission was called in, the officials filed their forms for the years missed and didn't face any penalties.

Gold said that she called for Whipple's resignation because she didn't file the form as required and because she felt that Whipple's appointment had been "pushed through so fast."

"The board should have advertised that this position was open and called for interested residents to contact them," she later said. "They should have followed the process to insure that there would be no favoritism, no game-playing."

Gold said that she didn't know anyone interested in filling the position.

She added that the school board should set an example for the community and the students, to show that following the rules counts.

"Honor is its own reward," she said.

Gold, Ed Kern and Allen Moss had voted against Whipple's appointment at a special meeting December 7.

She said that she would have taken the same action against any other board member. "I believe that the powers that be would do the same to me," she said.

Director's remarks irk PTAs

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

New Lake-Lehman school board member Patricia Gold says she has nothing to apologize for in remarks which she made about the PTA during a recent interview published in *The Times-Leader*.

PTA members don't see it that way.

School board members, PTA presidents and parents condemned Gold at the January 11 school board meeting for statements which she made during an interview, which appeared in the newspaper's December 29 edition.

Calling PTA members "brainwashed to the powers that be" who enjoy a "preferred status," Gold had told a reporter that the public schools have a caste system, in which "parents who follow the lead of district officials are in," while parents who question the district are "out."

She also said that for five years she had been put off, "fluffed off and stonewalled" by schools which are "closed like rocks."

Calling Gold's statements totally inaccurate, board member Dr. John Presper said, "This was condescending and detrimental to the parent-teacher organizations. In my six years on the school board, I can't remember Mrs. Gold coming to me for any information that I didn't give her. The caste system exists only in the mind of the one making the statement."

Board member Elizabeth Sichter said that she also took offense at Gold's statements.

"The PTA works long and hard for the children," said JoAnn Presper, Dr. Presper's wife and a former PTA member. "We aren't brainwashed, not an elite."

"You said that we misinterpreted your statement," said Joyce Birt, a past PTA president at Lake-Noxen Elementary School. "How can we misinterpret it? These comments to the media were unfounded and insensitive. Coming from a school director, they are hurtful and offensive to a lot of hard-working parents."

Lee Piatt said that the board's disunity on several issues concerned her. "We have a good board

"Many parents work full-time and also help us out. There are always those who work and those who complain. She shouldn't have thrown stones at us."

Evelyn Weaver
Ross Township PTO president

and a good district," she said. "Please work together for the good of the district."

Tammy McMahon, whose husband, former school board president Dr. Martin McMahon, resigned from the board in November after Gold questioned his eligibility to serve because the family moved to a different region of the district, outlined what the Lehman-Jackson PTA has done for the students.

The PTA works for all students, McMahon said. Fundraisers have paid for special assemblies, field trips, activities, the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) program, audio-visual equipment, computers and modern playground equipment. Its projects have earned it five state awards for excellence, she added.

"I was especially offended that Gold selected our school sign for her photo opportunity," McMahon continued. "I request that as my elected representative to the school board, Ms. Gold curb her use of the media to cause dissension in the district."

Gold replied that she had posed for a photo in front of the Lehman-Jackson school's sign because the administrative offices are in that building.

"What I had to say depicted my treatment as a parent," she added. "I served many years as a PTA member when my children were in elementary school. I'm very outspoken - I don't apologize for that. I never intended to insult the PTA. I don't regret what I said, only that others misinterpreted it."

She said that she had received "only one phone call" about the article, and that the person who approached her admitted that she hadn't read it.

Teacher sues

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district's decision to send Peiffer back to the classroom, Houck said.

The appeal has been filed with the Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas, which can either hold a hearing or simply review the case and give a decision, Houck said.

The second part of the lawsuit, filed with the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, asks that the secretary reverse the board's decision because it is "arbitrary and capricious."

"The board made an arbitrary decision and didn't base it on facts or the law," Houck said.

In both sections of the lawsuit, Peiffer is asking for reinstatement and back pay.

According to PAESSP records, Peiffer is certified as an elementary teacher, reading specialist and supervisor of reading, and

holds an administrative certificate as an elementary principal.

District solicitor Peter Savage said that Peiffer is currently earning approximately \$5,000 more and working 25 days less as a teacher than she did as federal funds coordinator.

"She felt that she should have been allowed to fill elementary principal Charles James' job while he was on sabbatical," Savage said.

"That position was filled by John Baranowski, in order to complete an internship required for an elementary principal's certificate."

Savage said that Peiffer has filed two other lawsuits with the Human Relations Commission against the district, in which Peiffer contends that she should have been allowed to fill James' position and that the district denied it to her because of her gender.

Debbie Miskalis disagreed. "I was the one who called Ms. Gold, and I know others who called her home and left messages on her answering machine or with her son," she said.

Ross Township PTO president Evelyn Weaver, who couldn't attend the meeting, said that possibly the *Times Leader's* reporter misquoted Gold. "That happens sometimes," she said. "I know that Mrs. Gold is trying hard, but she should have checked all sides of the matter. As a school director, she should have spoken to us directly. Her children aren't in elementary school any longer - she hasn't been exposed to the PTA for a long time."

Weaver added that Gold's comments didn't do justice to the district's parent volunteer groups.

"Many parents work full-time and also help us out," she said. "There are always those who work and those who complain. She shouldn't have thrown stones at us."

Ross Township PTO's 137 paid members generated \$6,000 profit from their latest fundraiser, which is all used in programs for the students, Weaver said.

The only school board member to defend Gold was Allen Moss, who worked with her to found the Lake-Lehman Taxpayers' Association.

"The article did a community service in educating the public," he said.



Alumni event

Enjoying a Gala Evening at the recent Immaculata College Alumnae Amethyst Ball held at the Conservatory at Longwood Gardens are from left, alumna Antoinette Iaquinto Makowski of West Chester, college director of development and alumna Jeanne Sullivan Francis and John Francis of Dallas.

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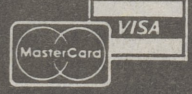


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by Sean O'Shea

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