

December 7, 2018

**PRESIDENT**

Patricia Brigham

Chairwoman Marva Johnson  
State Board of Education  
325 W. Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

**First VICE PRESIDENT**

Cecile M. Scoon, Esq.

Dear Chairwoman and State Board Members,

**SECOND VICE PRESIDENT**

Shawn Bartelt

With the impending departure of Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart, the League of Women Voters of Florida reminds you that as members of the State Board of Education you not only have the opportunity, but a constitutional responsibility, to conduct a national search to find the person who is best suited to oversee Florida's system of public education.

**TREASURER**

Theresa Francis-Thomas

**SECRETARY**

Lisa Hall

Article IX, Section 2 of the Constitution of Florida was overwhelmingly adopted by the people of Florida in 1998. That provision created the Board of Education, consisting of seven members serving staggered terms to oversee Florida's system of free public schools.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Joanne Aye  
Maggie Lawrence  
Michele Levy  
Charlotte Nycklemoe  
Marty Sullivan

By enacting that provision, the people of Florida made it clear in the Constitution that it is the Board of Education — not the Governor — that has the responsibility to appoint a Commissioner of Education. Further, the Board of Education members' terms of office were purposely staggered to ensure that as governors change, the Florida education system would be insulated from the disruption caused by political patronage appointments of a Commissioner of Education.

**STATEWIDE DIRECTOR**

Lisa Calleja  
P.O. Box 1911  
Orlando, FL 32802-1911

At a minimum, Floridians expect you to carry out a due diligence process aimed at ensuring Florida's students that an individual of the highest possible caliber oversees public education. We urge you to take this important duty seriously and not simply "rubber stamp" a politically motivated choice.

Under our state's current constitution, the Governor retains input to the process by filling vacancies which occur as Board Members terms expire, however, the Board must carry out its constitutional duty and make appointments based upon merit, not political patronage. While members of the Board may ultimately concur with the recommendation of the incoming Governor regarding who to appoint, the Board of Education should decline to opt for an expedient political patronage selection.

In sum, the Board should be guided by the constitutional statement that imposes upon the State a “paramount duty” to make “adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders.” Included in such a paramount duty is the selection of the best person possible to lead the effort. Finding such a person mandates that the Board conduct a national search and not just grant perfunctory approval to a political patronage appointment.

Florida’s children deserve nothing less.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Brigham".

Patricia Brigham  
President

cc: State Board of Education  
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