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To: Dr. Kent Mutchler  
To: Mr. Mark Grosso  
To: The Board of Education  
227 N. Fourth Street  
Geneva, IL 60134  
May 14, 2019

CC: Dr. Adam Law

I have been an educator in this district for 26 years and I have earned the rank of excellent. My personnel file contains my evaluations, which speak for themselves. During those 26 years, there has never been a single complaint made against me by a student, parent, principal, teacher, co-worker or community member. I have a high level of professional judgment and professional integrity. I have always maintained a professional relationship with the students, my fellow teachers, school staff and community members. I have poured my heart into the career I love, in a place I love. I have lived in this community for more than 39 years. I am a product of Geneva schools and I have proudly dedicated my career to giving back to the Geneva community as a teacher. I chose to raise my kids in Geneva and live here to foster a better life for my family and stay connected to the community I serve.

That is why it is of great concern and disappointment that I received a letter, a letter indicating that my, "conduct as a tenured teacher is found deficient and unsatisfactory." I want to be clear. The alleged deficiencies have absolutely nothing to do with my conduct as a teacher. It has everything to do with my conduct as an active member of the GEA, a citizen of Geneva, a registered voter, a parent and longtime member of this community. A teacher teaches students. Not a single student was involved or aware of any the "activities" I am alleged to have engaged in.

In this letter, I am alleged to have participated in "Prohibited political activity." It states that on March 19, 2019 I was "present and observed the interview of three of nine candidates" and "you observed and were present for the interview." Webster's dictionary defines activity as "the quality or state of being active: behavior or **actions** of a particular kind". Being present and observing are not actions, they are passive in nature. I know that you have been out of teaching for a long time, Dr. Mutchler, and that you have never taught, Mr. Grosso, but to teachers, words matter. If you want to allege that I engaged in "political activity", the letter ought to allege some form of activity. You included the definition of "prohibited political activity" as defined by Policy 3233 and the Ethics Act. Nowhere in either does it prohibit being present or observing. The

Policy and Act require some sort of activity or participation; some action. There is no evidence of my participation in this interview or forum. My presence and observations that evening; not during working hours, and at school where I do not work: were as a union member, a voter and a parent.

The other allegation, that has caused a letter to be placed in my employment file, alleges that I, once again as a teacher, used school resources for political activity. In response to an email (which in no way used school resources) requesting canvassing materials for candidates supported by the GEA, I had canvassing materials delivered to schools. This was done in my capacity as a GEA member. As you are fully aware, the school mailboxes may be used for GEA business. I did not leave Western Avenue school during school hours and deliver them. I did not prepare these materials on school grounds during contract hours. As so eloquently stated by Jeff Ward, these materials were to be used for canvassing during the upcoming weekend. I placed the materials into seven envelopes, which I sealed. I wrote the recipient's name on the outside of the seven sealed envelopes. There were no signs of political activity on the outside of the envelope. They were intended for the use, that weekend, of the seven people who had requested them. You have conducted your investigation and decided that this was improper. What did your investigation reveal as to how someone was able to view these materials that I sent to fellow union members in sealed envelopes? Has this board and its superintendent directed school staff to open the mail of teachers placed in their school mailboxes? Someone at GHS opened the sealed envelopes and then called Jeff Ward. What is the more insidious form of political activity, causing sealed envelopes to be placed in teachers' mailboxes or opening those envelopes illegally, without permission and calling a "political strategist" to tell him what they contained? What does the letter say that you are putting in that Geneva staff member's file?

It is my understanding there are 4 levels of punishment for such "activity." In order of severity, 1.) verbal reprimand, 2.) a letter in my file, 3.) time off without pay, and 4.) termination. You had the opportunity to review my performance history and you decided to move straight to the second level of punishment because I had seven sealed envelopes delivered to seven teachers who requested those materials? That is how you balanced my 26 years of service against my "activity"? I do know that when courts review these things, they do look at whether there was actual activity and whether the punishment is consistent in its application. The degree of punishment is particularly scrutinized when the courts are reviewing cases where it appears that the board is acting to suppress union or political activity.

Finally, your letter alleges that I have failed to "demonstrate a high level of professional judgment, maintain professional integrity, maintain a professional relationship with the community and comply with applicable laws and regulations." This paragraph is the most insulting of all. Your interpretation of the laws and regulations are wrong, and factually flawed. I proudly work for Ron Zeman at Western Avenue School. I invite you to meet with Ron, in my presence and ask him about my professional judgment. I invite you to ask him about my professional integrity. I invite you to ask our school community about my professional

relationship with students, parents and co-workers. Then, and only then, will I accept the scurrilous accusations you have made above.

I indicated in my opening that there has never been a single complaint made against me by a student, parent, principal, teacher, co-worker or community member. Even after this "investigation," I can still say that this is a true statement. During my interview, your attorney was kind enough to share with me that Bob McQuillen had lodged the complaint in regards to the envelopes. Bob, as you know is a resident of Batavia.

When you balance the nature of the alleged "political activity" versus the quality of my years of service; the only acceptable punishment is a verbal reprimand. Your decision to skip directly to a notice of remedy is disproportionate to the activity alleged. This acceleration of punishment is a clear attempt to suppress union activity and the exercise of my rights to support the political candidates I personally choose as a GEA member and a resident of Geneva.

Cathy Fuller