

School Leaders Are Not Listening

We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate." That quotation is often attributed to Thomas Jefferson.

On Sept. 15, the majority who participated, soundly spoke, voting 70 percent in ousting two board members and telling Dr. Benny Gooden and the remaining board a message. The message was clear: Be honest, transparent and include the folks you represent. They chose not to and the people spoke.

As one of the 22,000 alumni, my thoughts are \$300,000 (\$264,773 for renamed uniforms, venues and equipment and of course the \$36,256 in attorney fees) could be used for additional

education programs and building renovations that have been declared as needed. Renovating can be found in thoughts, too. I would like for the board to stop the process to change the name from Rebels to any other option. This has generated more dollars for county taxpayers to be obligated for.

Compromise will stop the board's division of this city. Is not the purpose of the board and Dr. Gooden to create a learning environment and show better results than what has been presented on its report card? Pride can cause folks, even leadership, to choose incorrectly.

"Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. ... It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition

is gone, pride is gone." C.S. Lewis.

Could those dollars find a better purpose? I feel the board should compromise. Save the dollars, the Rebel name and work to encourage Dr. Gooden to elevate the education of the students. Let's eliminate pride; the competition will stop. With pride, the students and faculty lose, as does Fort Smith.

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SOME BOARD MEMBERS GONE

I'd like to expand a bit on Emily Brook's letter ("Decision Made; Let's Move On") about accepting the School Board-imposed changes to Southside High School's mascot and fight song.

Ms. Brooks is indeed a very compelling writer

and a fine representative of her class. However, she missed one cogent point. When an elected board or agency legislates or imposes a ruling that the majority of its constituency opposes, controversial or otherwise, the electorate is at liberty to demonstrate their support or displeasure at the polls. That's called "democracy at work."

Yes, it's that simple. Two of the School Board members were replaced during the election just passed; a third was re-elected only because she ran unopposed. Two more will stand for re-election next year, and the final three in 2017.

It will be interesting to see how the Fort Smith voters respond, after time has separated the event from future elections.

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