



# BEVERLY HILLS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

*Educational Employees Working Together*

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Open letter on BHEA's right to endorse school board candidates by BHEA Pres. Chris Bushee:

“In the Sep. 25 edition of the Beverly Hills *Courier*, incumbent school board candidate Nooshin Meshkaty offered a poor explanation as to why she rejected the teachers' invitation to consider her for an endorsement in the Nov. 3 election.

“Voters will evaluate for themselves the validity of Ms. Meshkaty's reason—she cited conflict of interest—but consider the following. Current Board of Education member Myra Lurie and former board member Alissa Roston ran for re-election in 2007 as incumbents, and both sought BHEA's endorsement. Current City Council member Barry Brucker and former City Council member Linda Briskman each received the endorsement of our local police and fire unions, an endorsement that both prominently touted in their 2009 campaigns. I would never suggest that Mr. Brucker or Ms. Briskman did anything improper by accepting the endorsement of the police officers and firefighters. They worked hard for those endorsements and earned them by respecting the valuable service of our public safety employees. By contrast, Ms. Meshkaty is quoted as saying that it is “inappropriate...to seek a political endorsement from a group you are actively negotiating with.” I disagree. Endorsements are not negotiations. Endorsements convey support for broad principles while negotiations deal with specific proposals. Ms. Meshkaty's criticism of BHEA's endorsement process is a transparent attempt to apply a double standard when one considers that her own campaign chair, Mr. Brucker, accepted the police and fire unions' endorsements, groups of employees with whom he actively negotiates.

“Finally, the school board negotiates directly with the city council on the multi-million dollar joint powers agreement. Why, then, does Ms. Meshkaty believe it's appropriate for her to accept the endorsement of Mr. Brucker, an elected city official with whom she actively negotiates the JPA, but not of the teachers' union?

“School employees play a critical role in the success of our district's students. BHEA will continue to exercise its right to have a voice in the politics of our district. Our members are in a unique position to substantively contribute to the debate generated in school board campaigns. Our members care about the students we serve and BHEA's endorsements allow us to recommend those candidates whom we believe will best advocate for a supportive and productive learning environment.”