



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

RISA VETRI FERMAN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KEVIN R. STEELE
FIRST ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

OSCAR P. VANCE, JR.
CHIEF COUNTY DETECTIVE

STEVEN J. LATZER
CHIEF OF STAFF

COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY

COURTHOUSE
P.O. BOX 311
NORRISTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA
19404-0311

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE (610) 278-3090
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S FAX (610) 278-3095
COUNTY DETECTIVE BUREAU (610) 278-3368

October 4, 2011

Anthony Quinn, Esquire
Board President
Springfield Township School Board
1901 East Paper Mill Road
Oreland, PA 19075

**RE: John Halligan Anti-Bullying Program
Hosted by District Attorney Ferman and Sheriff Behr**

Dear Mr. Quinn:

I am writing to call your attention to the disgraceful way the Springfield Township School District and the Springfield Township School Board behaved, when the District Attorney and Sheriff recently hosted nationally recognized bullying expert John Halligan at the Springfield Middle School. It appears that the Springfield Township School Board put political interests above public safety and ahead of the best interests of your students.

As District Attorney, I have developed an unprecedented partnership with our local schools. Part of that relationship involves safety programs that we sponsor for our school communities across Montgomery County. Over the last three years, my office and the Montgomery County Sheriff have partnered with the County Health Department and Family Services of Montgomery County to bring a nationally recognized speaker on bullying, John Halligan, into our schools. To date, we have introduced John Halligan and the story of his son Ryan to students at ten middle schools and at five parent forums.

On Thursday September 22, 2011, we were scheduled to present John Halligan to students at the Springfield Middle School. This was the last session of a weeklong program during which Mr. Halligan spoke to students and parents from Abington, Lower Merion, Lower Moreland, Springfield and Upper Dublin School Districts. Your Superintendent, Wendy Royer, joined Montgomery County Sheriff Eileen Whalon Behr, John Halligan and I at a press conference on Monday September 19, 2011, and her comments touting the importance of our program were quoted in local newspapers. At each presentation thereafter, Sheriff Behr and Deputy District Attorney Sharon Giamporcaro spoke to students, parents and administrators to introduce Mr. Halligan's presentation. The events of the week were well received by all and enormously successful.

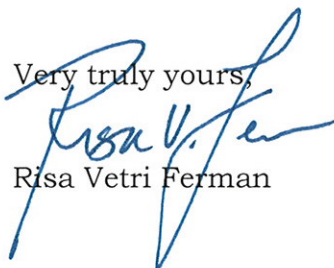
Imagine my surprise when I learned that on Thursday morning, September 22nd, when Sheriff Behr arrived at the school to introduce her speaker, she was told by a member of your staff that the School Board would not permit her to speak. After inviting the DA and the Sheriff into the school to conduct this important anti-bullying program, the School Board had the audacity to refuse to permit the sponsor to speak.

The excuse given was that the Sheriff is a candidate on the ballot in November and the school district has a "policy" that candidates cannot speak in your schools. This lame excuse rings hollow. Sheriff Behr did not attend this program in her capacity as a candidate. In fact, as is appropriate, there was never any mention of her candidacy or impending election at any of the presentations. Moreover, at the time your school district invited us to host this program, it was known that both the Sheriff and I would have been on the ballot in the 2011 election. I have to wonder what your School Board would do if the President of the United States asked to speak at Springfield High School next September to welcome the new school year shortly before the 2012 election.

Sheriff Behr appeared in her role as the sitting Sheriff of the county (and a former Police Chief), well aware of the dangers of bullying, with a serious message to deliver to the children in her introduction of the speaker you asked us to bring into your school. If your district does not want a person to speak in your school based upon a "policy", then I humbly suggest that you do not invite them in. Among your other failures, it is simply bad-manners.

The Springfield Township School Board and School District were unprofessional and ill-mannered at best; at worst your Board put their political interests over the interests of the children and families they are elected to serve.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Risa Vetri Ferman', written over the typed name.

Risa Vetri Ferman

cc: All Members of the Springfield Township School Board
Springfield School District Superintendent Wendy Royer
Montgomery County Sheriff Eileen Whalon Behr
Family Services of Montgomery County
Montgomery County Health Director Dr. Joseph DiMino
Montgomery County Safe School Coordinator Steven Beck
All Members of the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners (via email)