

My name is George Schiro. I take education very seriously. So does my family. Here are my son's accomplishments, as an Osceola School District student:

- Perfect score on Reading FCAT
- Perfect score on Math FCAT (4 years)
- Potential Key Scholar
- PRISM Sustaining Scholar for Outstanding Science and Math (3 years)
- National Advanced Placement Scholar (scoring "5" on 6 of 8 AP exams)
- Osceola's First National Merit Scholar (top 2500 nationally)
- Highest SAT Score (2370) in Osceola County history
- Valedictorian of his International Baccalaureate class

Who we choose to represent the interests of our students on the Osceola County School Board matters for the future of our children and our society. The upcoming school board election should not be about political pettiness. It should be about educational excellence and the never-ending pursuit of higher academic standards in the Osceola County School District.

From the Google online dictionary:

judg-ment

noun

1. the ability to make considered decisions
or come to sensible conclusions.
"an error of judgment"

What is the key characteristic of someone you vote for, someone who works on your behalf? Is it intelligence? Honesty? Decency? These virtues are all important. But the thesis of this article is: good judgment is the most important virtue in politics.

A politician with poor judgment will likely do far more harm than good.

Consider candidates for the district 1 school board seat, Jay Wheeler and Tom Long (district 5).

Oops! Long? He's not running for Wheeler's seat. Yet it sure seems like he is (rather than Leah Cariu).

But first, let's discuss judgment.

Years ago Wheeler made the choice to place campaign-like materials on school property, thereby giving the impression that doing so was "OK." That wasn't an example of good judgment.

Later, Long ordered the School District Director of Public Relations, Dana Schafer, to post a "No Pink Slime in Osceola Schools" message on the school district website, thereby giving parents and students the impression that "pink slime" was never fed to kids here. Yet children have eaten literally tons of "pink slime" in Osceola schools over the years. Long never bothered to check the facts himself. He used his own poor judgment instead.

Years ago Wheeler asked me to persuade other school board members not to select Terry Andrews as interim superintendent, apparently flouting the Florida Sunshine Law. Bad judgment? Perhaps. Was it good judgment knowing Andrews would not make a good superintendent? Definitely. Andrews was later appointed by Tom Long et al then dumped by the school board soon thereafter.

A public records request was made of Tom Long years ago. It was known that Long forwarded an email to the anonymous blogger "Carl Cricket." To hide his relationship with Cricket, Long intentionally withheld the email in direct violation of the Florida Sunshine Law. Schafer later learned Long had secretly printed and handed over the email. The result was a letter surreptitiously sent on Long's behalf. Trying to fool Dana Schafer was another example of poor judgment on Long's part.

During his 2008 campaign Wheeler spent some of his campaign money on cell phone charges, gas for his car and traveler's insurance. This was not proper, according to the Florida elections commission (to whom Long reported Wheeler). This would be an example of bad judgment on Wheeler's part.

During the May 2011 superintendent selection process Wheeler called candidates and spoke to them at length. He suggested they be brought in for interviews. Wheeler also made it clear that appointing Andrews to the permanent position of superintendent (in lieu of far more qualified candidates) would be a serious mistake. During the same process, Long neither called nor emailed any superintendent candidates. Instead he simply concluded Andrews would be the best choice to lead Osceola County schools. In this case, when it mattered most, Wheeler showed sound judgment while Long showed grossly flawed judgment.

Board chairperson Cindy Hartig showed similarly flawed judgment during the May 2011 superintendent selection process (she even lied repeatedly on the record). Yet once again Long gave his full support to Hartig as chairperson during the November 2011 board reorganization meeting, further demonstrating his ongoing poor judgment.

Wheeler has shown lapses in judgment over his 12 years as a school board member. But Long has shown far more serious lapses in judgment over his 4 short years as a school board member. The negative consequences of Long's poor judgment in supporting Hartig and Andrews still reverberate today.

So what does poor judgment have to do with Leah Carius, Wheeler's actual political opponent?

Long has been sending bulk emails supporting Carius and attacking Wheeler. The recipients of these emails gave their email addresses to Carius, not to Long. Apparently Carius or someone working for her handed over Carius's email list to Tom Long.

Long actually uses a special "12yrsIsEnough@gmail.com" email address when posting online attacks against Wheeler, also apparently on Carius's behalf.

Has Carius secretly been using Long to mount an attack campaign on Wheeler? Carius has been unresponsive.

Carius has even accepted campaign money from Cindy Hartig.

Considering recent history, any opponent of Jay Wheeler who not only accepts money from Hartig or Long but who also helps foster a political smear campaign (in secret) by a many years obsessed vocal critic of Wheeler is showing seriously flawed judgment before ever getting started on the Osceola County School Board.

All this begs one question:

Is Tom Long working for Leah Carius or is Leah Carius working for Tom Long?