



Date: October 15, 2024

To: WSPTA Board of Directors

From: Queen Anne Elementary PTSA, and the undersigned community members

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Re: Proposed Amendment to WSPTA Bylaws to Make Council Decisions More Representative

**Purpose:** Council PTAs should aim for fair and equitable representation of their constituent PTAs. To achieve that goal, WSPTA's governing rules should protect the voices of local PTAs by minimizing the ability of council boards to dilute member PTA votes at membership meetings.

**Problem:** Under the current WSPTA bylaws, each council board member has a vote in membership meetings, alongside each local PTA. We are asking for an amendment to the WSPTA bylaws that removes the ability of the council board members to vote during council membership meetings if there is a quorum of local PTA representatives. The crux of the problem is that every vote from a council board member dilutes the votes of a local PTA, thereby increasing the chance that voting outcomes do not accurately reflect the intentions of local PTAs. As we outline below, the sheer size of some council boards relative to the number of local PTAs can, in some cases, lead to 50%+ of votes coming from the council board. **Therefore, the current construct results in local PTAs being underrepresented at the council level.**

The impetus for this proposal is the recent Seattle Council PTSA (SCPTSA) election which offers a case in point for why a change is necessary. However, our research has also identified several other cases that illustrate various versions of the same problem – under the current rules, council boards can wield outsized influence in these membership meetings if they choose to do so. Our position is that WSPTA rules should not codify that choice.

**Background:** The WSPTA bylaws designate members of the council board of directors and representative(s) from each local PTA as the voting body for a council. The [WSTPA Bylaws](#) authorize the council to determine the number of officers and board members (see Article 5, Sections 6(A) and 9(A), all of whom are authorized to vote under the existing rules (e.g. co-chairs are both entitled to one vote each, a privilege not extended to PTA co-presidents). Further, there is no limit to the number of board members that may be appointed by elected officers. Leaving these choices to the councils themselves opens up the membership voting process to disproportionate influence by incumbent councils and unrepresentative voting outcomes. For example:

- [Seattle Council PTSA](#) (SCPTSA) provides for 27 board positions (up to 10 elected and up to 17 appointed), and the board can appoint additional members with no maximum; each local PTA gets one vote and there are currently 87 local PTAs. Thus, 27 of 114 potential votes (24%) can



come from the council itself as it stands today. And this percentage will only grow if SPS elementary schools are subsequently closed, as is currently being discussed.

**This problem is even more stark in smaller councils with fewer PTAs.** For example:

- Mercer Island PTA Council has 12 board positions and 7 local PTAs, with each entity entitled to one vote. So, the board represents 63% (12 out of 19) of potential votes.

**Other area councils reflect still further inconsistencies and disadvantages to local PTAs.** For example:

- In the Northshore, Issaquah and Bellevue councils, the voting body includes the council board and up to 4 representatives from each local PTA, each of whom is entitled to vote. While this reduces the potential percentage of votes coming from the board, it still requires each PTA to find 4 representatives to attend the council membership meetings to avoid having their voice diluted. For a group of volunteers with many competing obligations, this represents yet another challenge to overcome just to be heard by a body that is meant to represent them.

**The June/July 2024 SCPTSA officer election is a case in point for how this rule may have swayed the result.** In that election, a group of 7 challengers ran against 4 incumbents and 3 other candidates affiliated with those incumbents (i.e., this group ran as co-candidates). In all ballot races, the challengers lost to the incumbents and their allies by between 1 and 4 votes (per data provided by the SCPTSA). Given that the election was heavily contested, it seems likely that at least some of the then-current board members (13 in total) exercised their right to vote and did so by voting for themselves and/or their allies. However, it would have only taken 5 board votes to change the outcome.

To be clear, this amendment is not about re-litigating the past. The votes remain anonymous and whether the incumbents did in fact vote for themselves/their allies is irrelevant for consideration of this amendment. The crucial point is that this is a clear example of how an election could be decided by the incumbents themselves. If this were to occur, it would hardly be an equitable outcome in a process that should aim for equal representation of all member PTAs. **The solution to this problem is amending the rules to provide for council board votes only in cases in which those votes are needed to reach a quorum.** See our proposed amendment [here](#).

**Process:** We will submit our proposed amendment, alongside this letter with signatures, to the WSPTA on or before October 15, 2024. The amendment will then be researched and discussed by the WSPTA Governance Committee. As part of the research, the committee will consult the current WSPTA bylaws, WSPTA policy, National PTA bylaws, current WA state non-profit law as well as checking with WSPTA legal counsel and its parliamentarian.



After vetting and discussing any proposed amendments, the Governance committee will decide whether to forward to the WSPTA Board of Directors. The WSPTA Board of Directors will then decide whether the amendment will move on for consideration by members at the May 2025 WSPTA annual meeting. We will send any updates we receive regarding the proposed amendment to those signers who are interested.

Signed,

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Mary Ellen Russell

Green Lake PTA member, former board member  
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Eckstein MS and Roosevelt HS

Stephanie Newell

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Hazel Wolf K8 PTSA Board

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