

Broken Arrow

PRESS RELEASES

Frequently Asked Questions regarding School Board Disavowal Resolution

The Broken Arrow Board of Education approved the action of issuing a disavowal resolution at its June 29 Regular Meeting regarding one of its member's statements made in a local newspaper.

Because "disavowal" resolutions are so rare, it is understandable when misconceptions and or mischaracterizations about them occur.

In an effort to provide more clarity and understanding to School District patrons about disavowal resolutions, BAPS is providing the answers to the following Frequently Asked Questions:

- What is the purpose of a "disavowal" resolution?

The nature of a "disavowal" resolution is to distance oneself from the opinions and conjectures of another. In the case of the BOE, a vote was taken to ensure that the public understood the statements made by one member were not to be taken as the official opinion of the Board. As with most organizations, a single member of that organization (in this case the Broken Arrow Board of Education), cannot speak for that organization without its permission.

- Does the "disavowal" resolution approved by the Board mean that Board members cannot express their individual opinions?

*Absolutely not. When a representative member of a community entity speaks publicly, it is usually assumed that he or she speaks for that organization in a legal capacity. It is for this reason that it should be implied that the statements made are the **opinions** of that individual and not of the organization. Hence the statements are usually (and should be) preceded by the phrase, **"in my opinion"**. This relieves the individual of implicating the organization's regards to the matter.*

- Does this particular "disavowal" resolution infringe on a Board member's First Amendment rights?

No. An individual's right to express a personal opinion was never in question. As an elected official, one must remember to disassociate personal opinions from official positions of the organization represented. Once that is done, the individual can say almost anything without confusing the public as to the representation of the statements.

- This “disavowal” resolution has been called many other things in various media reports. Are those other characterizations correct?

No. There was no “proclamation” but a simple “disavowal”. There was no “censure” or “rap” involved in this process either. Perhaps the media did not have a clear understanding of the “disavowal” resolution and chose the aforementioned characterizations thinking they were synonyms when in fact they were not. The Board of Education simply maintained its distance from statements made by one member as not being a reflection of the board position on the matter commented on by the individual board member in the newspaper.