

For Immediate Release

June 3, 2015

SRC and City Settle First Amendment Complaint with Education Activists

Three former Philadelphia teachers have agreed to a settlement in their civil rights lawsuit against the School Reform Commission, former SRC Chair Bill Green, the City of Philadelphia and other parties for violating their constitutional rights during a February SRC meeting.

Ilene Poses, Barbara Dowdall and Lisa Haver, who are all members of the grass-roots advocacy group Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools, filed suit in federal court in March. Signs were confiscated from the three during the meeting in which the SRC voted on thirty-nine applications for new charters. Poses was also accosted by Philadelphia police and forcibly removed from the building when she refused to remove the sign she was wearing around her neck. APPS members regularly attend SRC meetings and frequently give public testimony on school issues.

As part of the settlement agreement, the SRC released a statement in which it reaffirmed the rights of the public to “...wear clothing and/or to carry signs that display viewpoints on issues of public concern.”

Commissioner Farah Jiminez, at a subsequent meeting, apologized for the SRC’s actions.

Paul Messing, attorney for the plaintiffs, said, “The settlement makes clear that there are consequences for violating the fundamental First Amendment rights of the public and that victims must be compensated.”

Nominal damages will be paid out of the city's litigation fund. All three plaintiffs have said that they will not personally benefit from the financial settlement. "We will be depositing all of the settlement money into a fund which will enable us to support programs for students and continue our advocacy work for public schools in Philadelphia", Dowdall said.

Contact: Lisa Haver, 267-918-4367