

Bureau Brief

Appointed v.
Elected School
Committee



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September 6, 1996

BB96-1

So What Is The Question Anyway?

The School Committee Ballot Question

In 1991, the Mayor and City Council passed a home rule petition which established a seven member appointed School Committee in Boston in place of the 13-member elected structure. The petition was then approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor in July, 1991 (Chapter 108 of the Acts of 1991). The first appointed Committee assumed office on January 1, 1992. The Act that established the appointed school board included a provision that required the Secretary of State to place a binding question on the November 5, 1996, regular general state election ballot asking voters whether the appointed board should continue in Boston beyond 1997 or be replaced by a 13-member elected Committee.

The ballot question will read:

"Shall an act passed in the General Court in 1991, entitled 'An Act Reorganizing the School Committee of the City of Boston' be repealed as of January 1998 and in place thereof the school committee structure as existing in 1991 be reconstituted after an election held in 1997?"

NO or YES

✓ A **NO** vote means that the School Committee will continue to be appointed by the Mayor from recommendations submitted by a Nominating Panel. Voting **NO** will keep the enabling legislation of the appointed committee, Chapter 108, in place in its entirety.

⊗ A **YES** vote means that the Act will be repealed as of January, 1998 and the appointed committee structure will cease to exist. The appointed Committee will be replaced by an elected Committee made up of 13-members, nine elected by district and four elected at-large. This is the same structure that existed in 1991. The elected Committee would take office on January 6, 1998.

The Bureau believes that the appointed School Committee is unquestionably the best choice for the future of the City of Boston. The appointed School Committee alone will not solve the problems of the BPS, but this structure, with its emphasis on policy and accountability, will allow real educational improvement to occur. Changing the appointed structure clearly would be a step backwards for a system that needs to move forward.

The appointed School Committee should continue because:

- ☐ it functions as a cohesive and accountable policy body, a quality that the elected committee lacked. Final accountability rests with the Mayor who is more involved with school performance.
- ☐ it allows individuals with the appropriate mix of skills and backgrounds to be policy makers and not politicians. The quality and diversity of members can be guaranteed.
- ☐ it has instilled fiscal responsibility in the BPS while reallocating more resources to classroom needs. The elected committee had a history of fiscal instability, ending 12 out of 15 years with deficits.
- ☐ it focuses on the overall educational needs of the Boston Public Schools, not just specific constituencies and is willing to act decisively on major educational issues facing the system.

Stay tuned for future Bureau Briefs on the November 5th ballot question.