

# **BOARD MEMBER VEXATIONS**

## **(See things from their perspective)**

**VEXATION #1:** **Huge time commitment.** *“I’ve lost control over much of my life.”*

**Mini-solution:** Adjust some Board meeting dates or adjust agenda items around holiday periods. Send Board materials out several days before Board meeting.

**VEXATION #2:** **Little solo power.** *“I must obtain 4 votes.”*

**Mini-solution:** Reduce “all” or “nothing” decision-making. Provide multiple alternatives on some recommendations, leaving more room for Board member discussion, public display of diligence, satisfaction from piece of the action. (See Handout of sample of Board Agenda Items.) Provide *same* information to every board member inside and outside of Board meetings. No favorites; can’t be “pals”.

**VEXATION #3:** **Handcuffs:** *“Laws for schools are different than businesses.”*

**Mini-solution:** At board candidate briefing make the distinction: Pre-K-12 schools can only do what law authorizes; private business can do anything law does not prohibit. Creative edge greatly curtailed.

**VEXATION #4:** **Indirect action.** *“I can’t ‘fix’ things myself; I must go through others.”*

**Mini-solution:** Highlight importance of policy in school governance. Establish rotational review of all Board policies –slowly but surely change things over four to five years (one or two Board terms.)

**VEXATION #5:** **Vicarious rewards.** *“Successes are often delayed (for years); credit goes to many; and one-on-one connections are few.”*

**Mini-solutions:** Introduce Board members to people at every opportunity where joy abounds. Bring good news to board table so the sense of good will and a great feeling tone starts every meeting. Build in “fun” things like group building tours, student interactions, and attendance at MSBA and AASA Conventions. Create opportunities (receptions, etc.) to meet and mix with people in positive ways. Occasionally, break bread together – small talk, not all business.

**VEXATION #6:** **Political environment.** *“Every thing I do-- including doing nothing -- has consequences. How do I avoid the ‘unintended’ consequences?”*

**Mini-solution:** Encourage association with other elected public officials at every opportunity to gain fuller understanding of and appreciation for representative government. Avoid rushes to judgment. Built in time to let “consequences” surface before action is taken in order to “figure out” best alternatives. Spread out process, e.g., informational discussions, First Reading, Second Reading, etc....let things perk awhile.)

**VEXATION #7:** **Too many players.** *“There are so many players – local, state, and national – that change is either too slow.”*

**Mini-solution:** Help Board members develop gain big picture perspective and tolerance for ambiguity within representative government by helping them rub shoulders with long-term elected public officials. Locally, establish a strategic plan with reasonable year-to-year goals, so accountability is high, progress can be seen on several fronts, and satisfaction can be more complete.