

## **A joint response from Jennifer Stevens & Jessica Lay in response to Jessica Ritter's statement**

We are two of the four community members who asked the Crook County Circuit Court to stop the current School Board from violating their own policies.

Three members of the current School Board members have 15 days left in their term of office. They want to make Cheyenne Edgerly the focus of their ire. We won't stand by and let them wrongfully shift attention from their misdeeds to a person who simply stood up for parents and their children.

The Board policies that are, by law, to guide the discharge of the rights and duties Chair Ritter cites in defense of the Board's actions do not give the current board enough time to appoint a new member. Meaning, in order to appoint a new member to the vacant position, they would need to actually violate the Board policies they swore to uphold and shorten the time period. That was their plan, until Monday night when the court issued a temporary injunction.

Back in 1944, there was an old film called Gaslight. It was about a man who psychologically manipulates his wife into believing that she was going insane. That is where we get the term "gaslighting" from – now a verb used in our culture for a person who is doing something manipulative but makes it seem like their opposition is the one doing the bad deed. Chair Ritter is the one playing the political game of doing something illegitimate and then acting like it is her opposition who is in the wrong. That is gaslighting, Chair Ritter, pure and simple.

Chair Ritter, why didn't you remind your fellow board member of Policy BBF which requires:

*Board members will treat other Board members, the superintendent, staff and the public with dignity and courtesy and will provide an opportunity for all parties to be heard with due respect for their opinions.*

And what about?

*Board members will treat fellow Board members, staff, students and the public with respect while posting online or to social media and will adhere to Oregon Public Meetings Laws, including when communicating with other Board members via websites or other electronic means.*

Instead, you allowed the mob and your fellow board members to publicly castigate and demonize Board Member Elect Edgerly – contrary to your own policies. She sat there and took the abuse, saying nothing. You and the board seemed to revel in it. What does that say about you – and your willingness to violate policy (again and again) for your own ends.

We were always taught to look at what a person does, not what they say. Ritter says her "top priority" is creating stability, but her actions show that her real priority is blaming Cheyenne Edgerly and paying union lawyers from Eugene a lot of money to come on over the hill and teach us Crook County bumpkins a lesson or two.

Ritter is right in one sense: the timelines for the appointment process are "clear" – but those clear timelines did not fit into the time left before the current Board leaves office, and so, they ignored their own policies in a failed attempt to appoint someone who will represent those in the Salem Educational bureaucracy, not the parents and community who make up our district. And

when called out by the community, via this injunction, they claim victim status and blame the ones who hold them to the policies they crafted and published. What they are screaming from the schoolhouse steps is “rules for thee, but none for me!!” Is that the lesson we want to teach our children?

Jessica Lay and Jennifer Stevens

Plaintiffs – Crook County Circuit Court Case #23CV23388