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District Two

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**Delivered Via USPS & Electronic Mail**

Ms. Heather Bennett, Board President  
% Salt Lake City Board of Education  
440 East 100 South  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111



**Re: Posting of an Armed Guard at the Speaker's Podium**

Dear President Bennett,

I am writing to voice my objection to the school bureaucracy's decision to post a Salt Lake City Police lieutenant next to the speaker's podium at last Tuesday night's Board of Education meeting.<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of any indication of physical threats to the Board, staff or the public, I would ask that the officer NOT be stationed in the front of the Board room.

My objection stems (in part) from the fact that during the unfolding of the Uintah Elementary School Lunchroom fiasco, the administration deployed a number of diversionary and intimidation tactics, that at times appeared to manipulate the services of the Salt Lake City Police Department.

This in turn, gave the public perception that the SLCPD was acting as the Superintendent's and Business Administrator's personal little army.<sup>2</sup>

We have seen instances where the Superintendent has attempted to dissuade parents from addressing the Board during the public speaking portion of the meeting.<sup>3</sup>

The placement of a Salt Lake City Police lieutenant in the front of the room, hovering over the speaker's podium smacks as yet another form of discouragement for members of the public wanting to address the Board of Education.

<sup>1</sup> Photograph of the February 3, 2015 –Salt Lake City Board of Education Meeting

<sup>2</sup> Uintah School Lunch Probe Gets Fishier and Fishier, Tribune – 10/03/14

<sup>3</sup> Salt Lake City Board of Education Minutes –October 7, 2014 p 4

**“Local school boards are the bedrock of our society, yet they are invisible to the public”**

Señor Florez –Deseret News

Additionally, it could also be perceived as a preemptive move to carry out the instructions that the public information officer (Jason Olson) delivered to the district and board leadership; in the form of techniques to “censure” me, in an effort to dissuade me from asking questions or fully participate in discussions during board meetings.<sup>4</sup>

To date, all of the intimidation tactics on public information officer’s “censure list” have been dutifully carried out with the exception of having me removed from the meeting. Page | 2 of 2

In light of this city’s current conversations on the use of police-force,<sup>5</sup> I see no useful purpose for having a Salt Lake City police lieutenant sitting in front of the Board room, other than to serve as another layer of artificial soothing of a school bureaucracy’s bruised ego.

Surely, the school administration can find other ways to safeguard its fragile self esteem without trampling on the rights of others. As an elected governing body, I would hope that we have matured past such childish insecurities and recognize that there is no need to fear those that ask questions or request information.

Shalom,



J. Michael Clára  
Board Member, District 2

**Enclosures**

cc: The Honorable Ralph Becker, Mayor of Salt Lake City  
Chief Burbank, Salt Lake City Police Department  
Salt Lake City Board of Education

**P.S.**

The placement of an armed guard at the speaker’s podium sends the wrong message. As the oldest governmental body (for this country), I would think that we would want to do all in our power to preserve that most basic right: the right to “petition the government for redress”.

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<sup>4</sup> Jason Olsen Email –Last Night’s Meeting, March 19, 2014  
<sup>5</sup> S.L. Mayor Becker Seeks Input on Use-of-Force Issues, Deseret News – 01/26/15