



CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT

AMY RICCARDI

SCHOOL BOARD - STERLING DISTRICT

CANDIDATE: **AMY RICCARDI**

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What would you like voters to know about you?

I am a mom of two public school kids and two stepsons; they went to school in Fairfax County Title 1 schools, so I am familiar with the Title 1 pyramid.

I am also the CEO of my own business, the Leadership Evolution Group. I have been consulting for 24 years for many different organizations, so I bring a certain skillset to the role. I understand corporate culture and management consulting.

How long have you lived in Loudoun County?

I have lived in Sterling since 2009 and I love my community because it is very diverse and very different from the rest of the county. It also has its own set of unique issues.

What made you decide to run for school board?

First and foremost, I have a real passion for education. I have a master's degree in education, and I have always enjoyed being in that environment of working with kids and adults. The nature of my work is being an advocate with a set of core values to advocate for people in all scenarios. My youngest just graduated from high school and now I have the time to give back to the community and to be an advocate for students, teachers, parents, and the administration.

Have you held public office before?

I have not but have always been interested in politics. I was student body president at my high school in Texas and was also involved in college. I do not have aspirations beyond this right now, but I do have the skillsets to fill the School Board role.

What are the main issues you would like to work on as a school board member?

Sterling has unique and interesting dynamics. We have a large Muslim, Hispanic, and Asian population and we need to make sure the needs of the community are being met. Kids should have access to schools with equity, resources, and opportunities.

Safety and security are a particular concern in Sterling since there are more drugs, gangs, and illegal activity than other parts of the county.

It is also difficult to get accurate statistics and data on learning loss, so we need to understand what to focus on and fill in the gaps.

The move to rebuild Park View High School is good because older schools like the ones in Sterling need the same level of attention as other schools in Loudoun County. Many of the schools were built in the 1950s and 60s and we need the same kind of atmosphere as the newer schools in the county that have state-of-the-art buildings.

Another issue is educating parents as to what is going on in schools. Sterling Middle School is one of two schools in Sterling that will be part of the multi-gender bathrooms. Safety and security will be problematic because they already have issues, and this would only increase behaviors like smoking and vaping in enclosed bathroom stalls. This goes beyond the transgender issue, and many parents aren't aware of this.

Teachers also need to feel safe and secure and enjoy what they are doing with the resources they need to create a great learning environment for all kids. Kids coming out of schools are not prepared for the workplace with things like dressing professionally, communicating, and generally being able to write well. Too much time is being spent on political issues.

What are some issues that are unique to Title 1 schools?

Many of the parents work multiple jobs which create long days, and they don't have the time and ability to focus on school. We also need a school meal plan for food security. Another issue is the extended school year program because last year the local nonprofit in Loudoun did not fully fund it, and the school board should not have missed that.

You have been active in sports on various levels. What do you think about where Title IX is now?

I played Division 1 volleyball in college, so I am passionate about Title IX. We need a hard line around protecting girls in all environments. Girls having privacy in locker rooms and bathrooms is important. They should not have to compete with boys in girls' sports. Girls are not allowed to participate in boys' sports. I agree with one solution that former tennis player, Martina Navratilova has proposed and that is if there are a lot of transgender males who want to

pursue girls' sports, we have an open classification for those sports open to everyone. There are co-ed volleyball teams in some schools, so having an open division in some sports for anyone to compete is one way to handle this, but girls' bathrooms and locker rooms need to be protected. In the faith-based community it is a real concern, and we need a solution that works for everyone.

What do you think about the controversial books being in schools?

I am in favor of the FCC Standard bills which were proposed to state legislatures by Moms for America, in Tennessee, Texas and across the country. This is a commonsense concept which is "if you cannot show it on TV or air it on the radio, you cannot use it in the classroom."

More copies of the graphic books that were purchased by LCPS are in Sterling schools than in other Loudoun County schools, so we need to look at the purchasing process too.

I think having diverse characters in books is good, but the problem is with the hyper-sexualized books that make even adults uncomfortable. If parents want these books for their kids, they can get them at the public libraries and bookstores.

In training to be a volleyball referee I also learned that promoting these books to students would be considered grooming, so teachers should not be allowed to use these under the guise of education materials.

What is one word that friends and family would use to describe you?

One word for me is even-keeled or principled.

My company has six core values, and they are:

- Speak Our Truth
- Compassionate Candor
- Inquisitive Listening
- Deep Thinking
- Fairness
- Everyone Is Coming From A Good Place.

These values drive my business and my life.