



*Plaintiff statements
November 16, 2017*



ERIC GOODWIN

My name is Eric Goodwin, I'm the father of an East Ramapo School District student and a former candidate for the district's school board.

I moved to the suburbs in 2011 expecting the whole package: A good community and a good school system. But after years of sending my 12-year-old son to public schools in the district, I've seen firsthand how school board decisions have affected our children's education and future opportunities.

I had to pay for my son's musical instrument for band class and I have to pay for his tutor because the instruction he receives just isn't good enough. He doesn't have access to the kinds of extracurricular activities that could determine whether he gets into a good college. I am fortunate that I can afford what the district can't provide, but many of my neighbors cannot.

When I ran for a seat on the school district board, I wanted to make a difference. But because of the current voting system, my voice

and the voice of those who supported me were stifled. We need people on the board with a vested interest in what is best for our public school children. That's the only way that children like my son will be given the tools they need to succeed.



WILLIE TROTMAN

Good morning, I am Willie Trotman, president of the Spring Valley branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The NAACP has long advocated for equity and justice in public education, going back to 1943 in the village of Hilburn, Rockland County and Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954.

More than 90 percent of students in East Ramapo public schools are children of color. These students deserve a good education. They need resources to be able to learn and to be a viable part of society. That is our fight.

Since 2006, the school board in East Ramapo has shifted control from public school advocates to private school advocates. The impact on our schools and students has been drastic. Services and programs have been gutted, resulting in the lowest high school graduation rates and reading and math scores in Rockland County. People used to move here for the public schools; today they move away if they can.

We feel that this is a taxation without representation situation.

There is simply insufficient representation of public school advocates on the school board, and we are not able to elect them because of the current election system.



DOROTHY MILLER

Good morning. My name is Dorothy Miller and I've been an activist for East Ramapo Schools for a long time. My children graduated from East Ramapo schools years ago. But I have watched our public schools decline. Today it is as if we have only the bare minimum – just enough to say that we have a school district.

We do have good teachers, but the buildings are run down. We've lost music, art, and other extracurriculars and advanced placement classes. After multiple appeals by activists to the NYS Education Department and representatives minimal additional funds have been allocated to be used for full day kindergarten and very limited activities. We need these programs to keep kids engaged and expand their minds.

The parents who have kids in the school district today want these things. But they are not able to elect people who represent them and the interests of their children. No matter how many doors we knock on, how many flyers we pass out, we just haven't been able to win.

The people who are impacted by the gutting of the school system are those who need it the most. The playing field needs to be leveled so we can make it possible for the kids in our neighborhoods to succeed.