

Editorial: Collier County Public Schools ... we'd like to tune in, watch student service discussion

By Staff Reports

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A citizens advisory board on academic matters to the Collier County School Board says college-bound seniors ought to be able to count political activism as community service work for state-sponsored scholarships.

As long, that is, as the activism is with politics that is nonpartisan.

With most political activity of the partisan nature — except for School Board elections, judicial posts and municipal seats, at least as decreed on paper — that condition is restrictive.

The community could have quite an argument over whether knocking on doors or taking part in phone banks ought to count as community service; or whether the advisory opinion assumes political skullduggery and precludes new, energized blood from giving politics a better name.

We put little stock in the argument of a school-system staff member who argued for the advisory board to beware a slippery slope: If working with Democrats and Republicans were allowed, can credit for helping Nazi and other fringe political parties be far behind? Meanwhile, others, taking a less extreme view, wonder whether any elections these days are as nonpartisan as this proposal seems to think they can be.

The good news amid all this is that the question is being fleshed out by citizen advisers before it gets to the School Board. Better, this committee is reconsidering its holdout position on having its meetings televised, as the two other school-system advisory committees have already done.

Let us all stand with the League of Women Voters of Collier County and others who support the education committee taking this important, public-interest step into the fullest possible sunshine.

That way, if this partisan/nonpartisan discussion carries on, we can see it all for ourselves; or there will always be other good issues and discussions up ahead that we can observe take shape.

