



## Return on travel costs more than worth it

*EDITOR:*

Is anyone concerned that some Monroe County School Board members are engaging in what can only be described as political retribution?

We watched as the debacle over travel expenditures distracted staff and the board from much more important things. We watched Chairman Steven Pribramsky state quite openly that his concerns about the law firm of Vernis and Bowling were predicated on how its staff talked about him during his campaign. Is this what they were elected to do?

Mark Hooper, the district's career and technical education coordinator, was the latest district employee to be hauled in front of the board to explain his travel expenses. Mark Hooper is an honest, decent, hard-working man I've known for 12 years. His dedication to students is unparalleled. Anyone who knows him will attest to his impeccable character and willingness to do whatever it takes to see students succeed.

His position and programs are 100 percent funded by grants. In some cases he identifies, applies for and wins these grants by himself. He is responsible, in part or in whole, for almost \$710,000 in grant funding for this year and last.

His efforts require him to partner with other school districts and travel is part of the process. His travel expenses for 2006-07 totaled \$8,651, and \$5,003 so far this year; that's an excellent return on investment. But evidently Steve Pribramsky and board member John Dick don't think so. Why? Because Mark Hooper is a supporter of Superintendent Randy Acevedo. I can think of no other reason since both Mr. Pribramsky and Mr. Dick have shown quite clearly that political posturing is more important than fiscal responsibility.

Take, for example, the \$50,000 biodiesel program they both supported. The program may be very good but according to Keys Sunday, it will produce 1,000 gallons of biodiesel. The district will buy that biodiesel for \$2 as opposed to \$5 on the open market. Do the math. Spend \$50,000 to save the district \$3,000. Wasn't it John Dick who talked about making tough choices in hard times? But, hey, going green is politically popular so the \$50,000 came from the board's discretionary budget.

We have more financial challenges ahead of us. The board should focus on those instead of playing politics. If the choice is an honest, hard-working district employee spending \$13,000 to bring in \$710,000 or politically motivated board members spending \$50,000 to save \$2,000. I'll take the working guy.

Josh Mothner

Marathon