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Our opinion

School board politics, Part II

Jerry Cammarata, the member of the Staten Island Community School Board who denounced Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano's bill to prohibit school board members from running for higher office, called the Advance last week to complain about an editorial critical of him appearing that day in this space.

While clearly unhappy with the entire piece, Mr. Cammarata's only specific complaint was that the editorial did not mention Eleanor Conforti, a former school board member who ran for City Council in the special election last spring. In Mr. Cammarata's view, Mrs. Conforti got off "scot-free" in the editorial because she is a Democrat.

Under current law, school board members may run for higher office, and others have, including Mrs. Conforti. We, Mr. Vitaliano and many others think that this is not in the schools' best interest since it sets up the school boards as stepping stones for those with political ambi-

tions. Hence Mr. Vitaliano's bill and our support for it.

The focus of the editorial was entirely on the clear merits of Mr. Vitaliano's legislation, and on the obvious self-serving nature of Mr. Cammarata's own vocal opposition to it. In fact, Mr. Cammarata himself had used the fact that he was "the only one on the school board who ran for public office" in the November election as proof that Mr. Vitaliano's legislation was a direct, personal attack on him.

That legislation, not the history of political candidacies by members of the school board, was the issue addressed in the editorial. It was Mr. Cammarata's outspoken criticism of the Vitaliano bill as "ludicrous" and a matter of "personal vengeance" that earned him a rebuke in the editorial as a public official who opposes what we think is excellent, needed and timely legislation.