

Montgomery County voters elect new school board members in a significant shift

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, Md. (7News) — The Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) asked voters to embrace three school board candidates on Nov. 5 and they did.

“The voters agreed with us, and they elected all three of our candidates in wide margins,” MCEA President David Stein said.

On Nov. 12, 7News sat down with Stein to discuss the changes in school board leadership.

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Incumbents Rebecca Smondowski, who lost in the primary election in May, Lynne Harris, and Shebra Evans are now out of their jobs.

Newcomers Rita Montoya, Laura Stewart, and Natalie Zimmerman are joining the seven-member board and will be formally installed on Dec. 2.

“It says that voters are ready to turn the page. We’ve been through a long period, several year period, of real problems in our school district with scandal and corruption and really just a lack of transparency and communication not only with staff and the educators, but with the community at large,” Stein said.

When asked, “What will your organization do to hold this new crop of leaders accountable?”

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Stein answered, “We’re going to work very closely with them. Not only the people coming on the board, but the people continuing on. We’re going to make sure they’re listening to the educators, listening to our concerns, because our working conditions are the students’ learning conditions.”

SEIU Local 500, which represents support staff like secretaries and bus drivers, endorsed the incumbents in the school board race.

In a statement, the union told 7News, “Local 500 stands ready to collaborate and build relationships with the new BOE members to ensure that the work of educational support staff professionals is recognized, respected, and valued at MCPS.”

The Montgomery County Public Schools Board of Education said the term for the outgoing school board members expires Nov. 30 and the incoming members will attend their first business meeting on Dec. 5.