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Contact: Mike Corwin, (512) 417-2240,  
[michaelccorwin@gmail.com](mailto:michaelccorwin@gmail.com)

## **Community members decry AISD board's rush to extend Superintendent's contract**

### **Press conference scheduled for 6:00 PM outside AISD board room**

AUSTIN—Parents, students and community members plan to speak out prior to tonight's meeting of the AISD Board of Trustees, the final meeting of the current trustees. With two trustees stepping down and two more seats being contested in the upcoming election, the composition of the board will be different the next time that it meets.

Community members and education activists were shocked to learn that among the items on the board's agenda tonight is a proposal to extend the contract of AISD Superintendent Meria Carstarphen until June 2015, a one-year extension of her current contract.

"It seems like poor governance for a board having its final meeting to lock AISD into such a contractual obligation," said Mike Corwin, parent of an AISD first grader and activist with Occupy AISD. "The election will take place in a few weeks, and in many ways it's a referendum on the current leadership of the district. It is profoundly undemocratic for the outgoing board to make a decision like this tonight."

Concerned citizens also questioned the rationale for the

proposed extension. “They’ve already extended Carstarphen’s contract once on the basis that it shouldn’t come up in 2013 while the Texas Legislature is in session. But what’s the reason for a further extension?” asked Corwin.

The *Austin Chronicle* reported on October 14 how “big-name and back-room Carstarphen backers” are in a state of panic over the possibility of new blood coming to the board of trustees in the November 6 elections. Coverage of the proposed extension in today's *Austin American-Stateman* quotes Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce spokesperson Drew Scheberle praising Carstarphen's leadership.

“We can’t help but think that this proposal coming out of the blue is another move by the supporters of the status quo who fear the change that is coming to the board,” said Corwin.

Speakers at tonight’s press conference will also address concerns about Austin Kids First (AKF), a new PAC established to raise money for and support candidates in the local board election. Critics say that AKF has not been up front about its agenda, pointing to operators in the group who have connections to pro-charter school groups and who vocally supported the controversial decision for AISD to impose the IDEA charter school on two East Austin schools.

“This election to the AISD board is unprecedented in a number of ways. After a couple of tumultuous years here, the Austin public is eager for a chance to weigh in with our votes on the future of our school district,” said Corwin. “We shouldn’t tolerate anyone trying to circumvent this democratic process.”