

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS CANDIDATES GUIDE

2008

(Birgit) Erika Kohl – School Committee

Background and qualifications:

I believe I bring a strong commitment to providing high quality education to our children, as well as the experience needed to ensure an effective use of our tax dollars. This commitment to education began when, as a young Air Force officer in the 80's, I requested the opportunity to bring some of the science we used on base out to the local public school.

I discussed satellites in a middle school science class, and

I've been volunteering in classrooms ever since, including classrooms here in Westford.



Additionally, I have run two educational organizations. I've run one teaching organization that included a budget and one that had almost no budget. For the past two years I managed a group at my company whose responsibilities included training employees in 5 core engineering skills. For this I had a budget to recruit instructors, pay for supplies, provide the multi-day classes, and monitor results. In this role I initiated activities to both gain insight into the effectiveness of our courses, and to then improve those courses accordingly. I believe my dedication and my experience will help me to help our schools.

1. What do you think are the top issues facing the School Committee right now?

I think there's no doubt that the economic downturn, when combined with Westford's existing fiscal difficulties, is the top issue facing the school committee; just as it is the top issue facing our other town departments. Various budget items, such as fuel costs and health care costs, have risen faster than inflation. Additionally, Westford's schools have continued to see growth in the student population year to year, another cost driver. It is clear that Westford's schools must continue to be efficient in expending funds.

The School Committee has a hefty challenge when it works the school budget in this environment. I've been watching the School Committee wrestle this past month with crafting a budget to meet a dollar allocation from the town that was lower than the School Committee's original request. I've witnessed the anguishing process of deciding which budget items stay in and which don't. I believe my experience – helping in the classroom, teaching in the classroom, and managing teaching organizations – will help me to understand the implications of choosing one budget item over another when the time comes for me to help make those difficult choices.

2. What issues most influenced you to run for School Committee and what would make you a good committee member?

No single issue or set of issues spurred me to run for School Committee. I'm running because I believe passionately in educating the children of today so that they can build

the world of tomorrow. No single issue or set of issues spurred me to run for School Committee. I'm running because I believe passionately in educating the children of today so that they can build the world of tomorrow. I hope to continue Westford's tradition of providing our kids a high quality education.

I believe I would be a good committee member because I think my decades-long dedication to education and experience with education would inform my positions on issues. Just as importantly, I understand that the committee is a team, and that my positions on issues would also be informed by the background and experience of others on the committee, as well as those of the educators and administrators reporting to us. I would strive to maintain a positive and cooperative environment so that, as a team, we could do what is right for our kids and for Westford.