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Case Study – Mrs. Bumble and Her Band of Busybodies

1. **Summary** – St. Petersburg and Dunsberry are two neighboring school districts, who each rely on federal funds for various student programs, ranging from school lunch subsidies to computer labs. St. Petersburg is a more liberal district, the largest district in the city, and Dunsberry is a smaller, more conservative district, which is home to the state’s governor. I am the principal of Dunsberry’s elementary school. Recently, legislation passed, which gave local authorities more control over these federal funds. Some influential parents who are part of an advisory committee have met with me about this, and they would like me to spend these federal funds on a new computer lab, like St. Petersburg has, rather than the current fund use, which is free and reduced lunch for qualifying students. I reply that the new legislation was not intended to end the free and reduced lunch program, that this program helps our students, and that this program would continue to be funded with those federal dollars. Mrs. Bumble, the chairperson of the committee is none too pleased with my response, and she tells the state governor (her neighbor) that she and her influential friends are concerned that federal dollars are not being spent wisely, and that the governor should alert the federal government of this. Oh, and she told him that I should be fired.
2. **Problem** – Many influential members of the community in which I am principal are displeased with my decision to allocate federal funds, and they have voiced their displeasure to the state governor, recommending I be fired.
3. **Significant Information** –
 - a. **People** –
 - i. I am principal of Dunberry’s elementary school in charge of allocating federal funds.
 - ii. Mrs. Bumble is chairperson of the advisory committee I have displeased. This committee would like me to cut funding for free and reduced lunch and use it for a new computer lab. The committee is made up of influential community members.
 - iii. The state governor is Mrs. Bumble’s neighbor, and he has been made aware of my unpopular decision.
 - b. **Place** –
 - i. My school district, Dunberry, is a small, conservative, and presumably wealthy community.
 - ii. Our neighboring district, St. Petersburg, is the largest in the city and is comparatively liberal. They have recently purchased a new computer lab, which is the envy of my community’s members.
 - c. **Program** –
 - i. My school is the elementary school of Dunberry.
 - ii. My school offers free and reduced lunches to students who qualify.

4. Prioritized Information –

- a. I am the principal in charge of allocating these federal dollars.
- b. An influential group of community members wants me to use these dollars for a new computer lab, while I intend to keep using them to fund free and reduced lunch.
- c. The state's governor has been told by the leader of this group that I am misusing these funds and that I should be fired.

5. Solution –

- a. As the elementary school principal, my role is to decide how these federal dollars will be spent.
- b. I have handled the meeting with the advisory committee constructively. I listened to and considered their concerns, clearly stated my own views, and made a decision I believed was best for my school. However, I was a bit caustic when I told Mrs. Bumble that she should concern herself with curriculum matters and leave child nourishment to the government.
- c. Personally, I would form a committee of my own, made up of a diverse group of people – teachers, community members, parents, etc. I would ask them to discuss the matter and report their findings to me, at which point I would review the matter again.
- d. I would contact the superintendent. However, I would try to do it casually, bringing it up in conversation, rather than calling him as though it were an emergency.
- e. My concerns are that I may lose my job for political reasons.
- f. I believe that more local control is always better. In fact, I don't know why the federal government even funds state schools.
- g. I believe the federal government should have complete control over its own programs. The source of the money should be allowed to determine its use.
- h. I don't know how I would react. As stated earlier, I don't know why it's the federal government's role to fund student lunches. It seems to me this should be parents' role. On the other hand, it's hard to watch children go hungry if their parents do not provide food for their children.
- i. I believe this program does have an influence on students' ability to achieve in school. The argument simply can not be made that hungry students can perform as well academically as well-fed students. However, should the federal government pay for student lunches? If anything, I could see the argument for state government funding lunches, as it would clearly be funding a program which helps students achieve.
- j. I do believe it's appropriate to discuss political topics such as this with parents. However, expressing my opinion is certainly not worth losing my job over when I don't even have control over it in the first place.