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Sarauw Defends Record as Document of Her Reprimand While a Teacher at CAHS Surfaces

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Senator Janelle Sarauw at the V.I. Legislature on Sept. 12, 2022. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Senator Janelle Sarauw on Sunday night pushed back against an official letter of reprimand that dates back to her tenure as an educator in 2009, which has resurfaced as the senator seeks the second most powerful office in the territory.

The document, a memorandum titled "Meeting Summary and Reprimand" on Dec. 3, 2009, details what was established during the meeting regarding Ms. Sarauw's behavior against an assistant principal at the Charlotte Amalie High School, where Ms. Sarauw taught social studies. The meeting resulted in a reprimand for the former educator with a recommendation for "immediate removal from CAHS" if Ms. Sarauw's behavior proved stubborn.

According to the document, which has been perused by the Consortium, during the meeting the following complaints were established against Ms. Sarauw as factual:

- a. "You arrived at 12:20 p.m. to take your class that should have started at 12:05 p.m. Contrary to established policy, you left."
- b. The assistant principal at the time "encountered your third period class in the hallway and addressed them about their destination and lateness to class."
- c. "You shouted commands to the students to get to class even though" the assistant principal at the time "was addressing them. This resulted in at least one student directing his classmates not to listen to the assistant principal "because the teacher was calling them to class."
- d. "In a subsequent conversation between you and" the assistant principal, "you were blatantly rude and disrespectful as you chided" the assistant principal "to continue documenting, having meetings, and putting notes in your mailbox. In essence, you exhibited much disregard for your supervisor's attempts to get you to correct your behavior. You actually stated, 'I am immune to those notes sent to me.' You exhibited an attitude of callous indifference to recommendations from your supervisor."

The document further states, "For this school year, this meeting constitutes the third such hearing regarding inappropriate decisions you have made as a member of this staff. In each situation, you were given clear directions about what is appropriate and what corrective measures you were expected to implement. Yet, it appears that you deliberately ignore all directives for improvement from the administration and you continue to do whatever you want. Firstly, you posted the most derogatory information regarding CAHS administration on the internet based on outright lies. Then in violation of basic school policy, you sent students off the campus in your vehicle to purchase items when they had class. Thirdly, you were late for your third period class, and when confronted by an administrator you became rude and disrespectful. Your continuous lateness to your classes has created discord among your colleagues in the Social Studies Department and your students continue to lose valuable instructional time."

The document adds, "Again, Ms. Sarauw, CAHS is a professional environment with basic expectations for members of staff. There must be consistency in the messages we send to students. Yours cannot be contrary to that of the administration, and students must never witness your disrespect to authority as was the case on Wednesday, 11/25/09. For this you must be reprimanded."

"Therefore, this letter serves as a letter of reprimand for the disrespectful, insubordinate behavior you exhibited to your supervising administrator in the presence of your students on Wednesday, November 25, 2009. An immediate improvement in your attendance and attitude is expected. By copy of this letter to your personnel file and to the insular superintendent, you are hereby put on notice that any repetition of such behavior will result in a recommendation for your immediate removal from CAHS."

Before the Dec. 3, 2009 meeting, a letter detailing Ms. Sarauw's final evaluation for the school year 2008-2009, included an unsatisfactory rating in the categories of attendance and promptness, and required that Ms. Sarauw take steps toward improvement for the 2009-2010 school year. The letter was signed by the insular superintendent at the time.

The Consortium reached out to Sen. Sarauw on Sunday, and she provided responses to the letter of reprimand, arguing against each of the complaints established as fact, according to the letter. Ms. Sarauw was also part of that meeting.

Ms. Sarauw said her tenure at CAHS was not hostile, however she was being supervised by someone who was close to her and her family, who the senator said had a hard time accepting "that I was no longer the kid that they expected me to be."

She stressed that the assistant principal was "a damn good educator; I would never take that away... Ms. Sarauw also said the assistant principal knew the classroom and was an excellent English teacher." However, the relationship at the school between the two was contentious because "it's like your family member. It's like taking your sibling and then all of a sudden you're the boss of your sibling, things get hostile. And I don't have no other write-ups from any other principal, and CAHS had five principals," the senator said. She said she and this assistant principal were at war.

Regarding the matter involving the student leaving campus to purchase items using Ms. Sarauw's vehicle, the senator said, "We had a volleyball tournament, they left at fourth period; they did not have a fourth period because that was the invitational tournament for CAHS."

Relating to the incident where Ms. Sarauw exhibited disrespectful behavior, the senator said she had "cussed out" a former gym volunteer for making an inappropriate "comment to one of my volleyball players." Ms. Sarauw said she used profanity against the former gym volunteer because she was disgusted by the comment. She said this volunteer eventually landed in jail in 2012 for sexual offenses against a minor.

Regarding her students being in a hallway at CAHS when they were supposed to be in class, and Ms. Sarauw shouting commands to the students to get to class even while the assistant principal was addressing the students, Ms. Sarauw said, "I will never forget that day. That's the day I wasn't feeling well." She said she had asked a school official to cover her class as she needed to go get some medication "across the street at a corner store." She said the assistant principal was "barking" at her to get to her class, however Ms. Sarauw said she went for the medication nonetheless because she wasn't feeling well.

The senator said the reprimand letter was a standout incident that goes contrary to her laudations at the school, including an honor as the most inspiring teacher during the 2009-2010 school year, and an honor from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools when the organization was evaluating CAHS for accreditation, awarding Ms. Sarauw's classroom as a model that should be followed.

Yet the senator concluded that any unbecoming behavior she may have exhibited during her tenure as an educator at CAHS, could also be attributed to her age, at the time 21 years old, and that she has since grown. "I was 21, I was a baby. I was 21 then, I'm making 37 in two days, so I'm turning 37 in two days and people grow, evolve and they mature," she said.

Senator Janelle Sarauw is running as lieutenant governor with Senator Kurt Vialet, challenging incumbent Governor Albert Bryan Jr. for the territory's highest and most powerful office.