

## Remarks by Joe Dumas – School Board Candidate, District 2 – April 17, 2008

Good afternoon. I'm Joe Dumas – I'm a UTC professor and I'm running for the District 2 seat on the Hamilton County School Board. I'm proud to be part of the Education Team with Rhonda Thurman and Gregg Juster and I look forward to helping get our schools "Back on Track" in 2008, and beyond. As a professor, I'm not used to speaking for less than 50 minutes at a time. But I know you all have other things to do and other places to go, so I'll keep my remarks brief.

First, for a little background on myself: I'm 46 years old – I'll be turning 47 in a few days. I am about to complete my 15<sup>th</sup> year on the faculty at UTC. And I'm a living, breathing testimonial to the power of education in a person's life. I grew up in Mobile, Alabama, the son of a firefighter and a stay-at-home mom. Neither of my parents went to college, other than to go back and take a few classes when they were much older than traditional students. But they wanted their children to have a better life than they did and they always stressed to us the value of working hard in school and getting a good education.

They obviously got our attention because their three children earned eight degrees between them from six different universities, including two doctoral degrees. I'm standing here before you today because my parents believed in the power of education. I believed in it enough to become an educator myself. And I want to make sure that the next generation of young people coming through our schools has the preparation to succeed in college, and in life, the way I did. For that to happen, our schools must provide a safe and peaceful environment in which our students can learn. Sadly, we all know from the many recent incidents of violence and disruption in our schools that this is not currently the case.

Rhonda, in her role as Chair of the Disciplinary Committee, has been doing her best to improve things, but she can't do it alone. She needs help. My opponent has not been part of the solution in his eight years in office, so in my opinion he is part of the problem. If you want more of the *status quo*, by all means re-elect him. If you want things to change for the better, you have to vote for change – and I am offering voters in District 2 a chance to do just that.

Another thing that we need to do to improve our schools, for the benefit of our students, is to put more of our financial resources into the classroom. Mr. Tommy Kranz, the CFO of the school system, has told us point-blank that the school system does not need more money – we just need to spend the money we already have more wisely. Mr. Kranz tells us that the benchmark of successful school systems is that they put at least 90% of their overall budgets directly into the classroom. Right now, after eight years of my opponent in office, including three as chairman of the board, we stand at about 84%. That is not good enough.

Once again, if you want more of the same – more money going into administration and less in the classroom – you should vote for my opponent; that's what he will give you. More of the same. If you want someone to help Mr. Kranz put more of your tax dollars into the classroom, then you need to vote for change. You need to vote for me.

OK, so my opponent hasn't done anything in eight years to improve school discipline and safety, nor has he made any progress toward fiscal discipline. Unless you call repeatedly asking for tax increases and spending the money on the care and feeding of bureaucrats fiscal discipline. Oh, and he did violate the Sunshine Law in choosing the new school superintendent while awarding that \$150,000 consulting contract to his country club buddy Jesse Register – that is why the board had to vote a second time, because the first time was in violation of the law and didn't count.

But, if you happen to live on Signal Mountain, my opponent will point to his crowning achievement of getting you that shiny new high school that will be opening in a few months. What he won't remind you of is that he was only able to accomplish that feat by "bribing" the county with \$10 million of his town taxpayers' money. Some accomplishment. Especially considering that while the new school was being built, other schools in District 2 and all around Hamilton County were being neglected. Some of them are virtually falling down around the students and the teachers. I say maintaining our existing schools, not to mention making sure they have textbooks and other needed items, should take priority over building new schools that we have to heat, cool, staff, and maintain.

I could go on and on, but I promised to keep this brief. Once again, if you want more of the same – if the *status quo* is good enough for you – then by all means, re-elect my opponent. More of the same is what you will get. More violence and discipline problems in school, more problems swept under the rug, more back room deals, more money spent on administration while our students and teachers beg for scraps. If that is good enough for you, my opponent is your man.

But if you want positive change – more emphasis on discipline, safer schools, openness and accountability, fiscal responsibility, and more of your money going into the classroom for the benefit of students and teachers – then you have to vote for change. If you live in District 4, that means voting for my friend and teammate, Gregg Juster. If you live in District 1, that means re-electing the only member of the current School Board who has taken a stand on these important issues, Rhonda Thurman.

And if you live in District 2, that means voting for me, Joe Dumas, to be your next representative on the School Board. I promise to represent the best interests of the students, teachers, parents, and citizens of District 2 and all of Hamilton County. I hope you will give me your sincere consideration and, on August 7<sup>th</sup>, your vote. Thank you and good afternoon.