

**Response to “Accountability Agreement” Proposal
(published on Chattanooga.com, Dec. 28)**

I think that the candidate for County Commission District 8, John Bailes, makes a strong argument for school funding reform by establishing a contract between the primary funding body (the County Commission) and those ultimately responsible for how those funds are spent (the administration of our school system; primarily the superintendent).

Something must be done to achieve actual results and responsibility in our school system since all we’ve had in the past several years is finger pointing and bluster. When all was said and done, there was still a significant tax increase passed (taking several hundred more dollars out of my pockets), an outgoing (and somewhat ineffective superintendent) still received a huge bonus for staying on another year and “advising,” and our school system is still no better off.

The additional concern I have in this funding/public education equation is the Hamilton County School Board. They can apparently spend tax dollars without the consent of the county commissioners (i.e., the hotly debated and hugely unpopular “consulting” contract with outgoing Supt. Jesse Register). I suppose they ultimately answer to the voters; however, their “answering” is often years in coming and, with the memory of most voters no longer than a spring shower, I don’t have much confidence in the prospect of reform in that body as long as voters go to the polls and vote the name they most recognize, canceling out the votes of those who actually bother to be informed, stay abreast of the issues, and cast out those who fail to do a good job for the people.

Keep the good ideas coming, John. We’re long overdue for some progressive leadership in this county. We currently have “leaders” who rant about issues over which they have no authority (who should and should not get married, etc.) and who are more interested in getting their name in the press than they are with coming up with solid solutions to our troubling problems.

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