

Statement From Mack Guest

June 10, 2010

Thank you all for coming tonight. I wish that I could be here, but I am in Colorado at a business meeting with one of my largest clients.

If you don't know me, my family and I have lived in Oconee for 14 years, and my daughters both attended Oconee schools. My youngest, Amanda, will be a junior at OCHS this year. My older daughter, Laura, will be a sophomore at UGA. I also have a son, Dutch, who lives in Watkinsville with his wife Mary Beth. Dutch and Mary Beth are expecting a child in July, so my wife Camilla and I are looking forward to enjoying time with our first grandchild soon.

After being involved with several small and medium sized businesses, I founded a company called LAD Logistics in 1997. Today we have warehouses, a logistics center and offices in Watkinsville, and employ 24 people. I also serve on and have chaired several boards in the community, so I have a fair amount of experience with multi-million dollar budgets, which is very critical in these economic times. I am a graduate of the University of Georgia with a degree in education. You can learn more about me at www.mackguest.com.

We have accomplished a lot in the past three years. Most importantly, our schools have continued to improve. This is not easy since they were already outstanding. Led by the state's best teachers and administrators, our students received state leading test scores at all levels this year. In 2009 on the ITBS and in 2010 on the CRCT, Oconee achieved its highest scores in the past three years. Our composite SAT and ACT scores are among the best in the state. And more than 98 percent of Oconee students passed the state math, science and reading graduation tests. Despite what some would have you believe, we are clearly on the right track.

Over the past four years, we have invested more than \$33 million to upgrade technology, infrastructure, and classroom and athletic facilities across our system. This includes more than \$7.3 million for specific facilities needs at North Oconee High School and its feeder schools. These investments are critical for our children's future.

We all know times have been tough over the past few years. They have been for the School Board. We have lost 15 percent of our state funds (more than \$4.6 million). Despite those losses, we have maintained our high achievement levels. We have cut central administration expenses by 41 percent (more than \$690,000) over the past three years, and redirected extra funds back to the schools, where they belong. We have avoided furloughing teachers by finding efficiency in other places in the system. And we have not raised property tax rates.

There are other issues in this campaign that you might hear about. Some of them are about personnel matters and other issues that I cannot comment on. I strongly believe in the Superintendent's right and ability to make his or her own personnel decisions, and I am a believer in Dr. John Jackson. You might also hear about a land purchase for a future school board office. This money was allotted in SPLOST funds and had to be spent; we also made a commitment to the city of Watkinsville to keep our offices in the city and wanted to honor that commitment. When we build, we are hopeful it will be in partnership with the county and city so we can save significant funds. I believe this was a good investment.

Thank you for your time tonight. Please visit my web site at www.mackguest.com and call or e-mail if you have any questions.

--Mack Guest