

BizPac 2008 Candidate Information

Name: Susan A. Currie

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Home Address: 9 Beck Street, Huntsville 35806

Public Office You Are Seeking: Huntsville City School Board, District 5

Campaign Address: P.O. Box 5241, Huntsville, AL 35814

Education: Ed.D in Educational Leadership

Work Experience: 32 years in public education- 23 years as a teacher, 5 years as a school administrator, and 4 years as director of special education services. I also have 2 years experience as a restaurant manager.

Community Involvement: I am an alumna of Leadership Huntsville (class 20), a member of the Committee of 100, a member of Rotary of Greater Huntsville, and a board member for Huntsville Rehabilitation Foundation. My greatest community involvement occurs daily with my job, however. As an administrator at Sparkman Middle School, I saw many needs of students and families first hand. Approximately 40% of this community lives at the poverty level (receiving free or reduced school meals). I adopted families every year to make certain that there was food to last during the school breaks, utilities or heating fuel during the winter, clothes, and a gift or two from Santa on Christmas Day. I have arranged for local churches to assist in the installation of indoor plumbing and local retail stores in providing warm coats for students who had none. I have taken children who could not afford medical services to the doctor and solicited glasses for those who could not afford to buy them. I have placed abused families in touch with shelters and provided a safe haven for abused children until DHR could arrive. I have seen, first hand, the needs of a community, and tried to provide help when and where help was needed. For this service, I have received the respect and trust of the community. My new position affords me greater opportunity to help families in need in Madison County.

Previous Political Experience: I have not previously run for office myself but I have spent a lifetime helping my father, Senator Ray Albright of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Not only did my father insure that I was bitten by the "political bug", but he also instilled in me the love and respect for public service.

Campaign Organization (staff and key volunteer leaders): Dan Currie serves as my campaign manager. Jinjer Lucas is the treasurer. We are using Driscoll Rucker Group as our consultant agency.

Are you a graduate of the Committee of 100's Political Training Institute? yes

Have you received any other political training? Please describe. None other than personal experience.

Are you a graduate of the Leadership Huntsville-Madison County program? yes

How much money have you raised to date for your campaign? \$8000

2008 BizPac Interviews Huntsville Board of Education Candidate Survey Questions

1. *Why are you running for this office and what do you hope to accomplish during the next four years?*

I believe schools are the foundation of our communities. Communities with strong schools maintain healthy property values and encourage economic growth and prosperity for all. Currently, our schools have fallen short. With Huntsville's national ranking in business and economic development, we should not just expect great schools, we should demand them. I want to lead this effort.

I will work with our stakeholders to accomplish the following:

Increase the educational performance of all students

Ensure that all schools are safe, clean, welcoming places for our children

Provide the support and training needed to have world class educators

Demand fiscal responsibility

2. *What are your ideas to ensure stable long-term funding for Huntsville City Schools?*
In a word, fiscal responsibility! Too often, programs are added without thought of long term funding or duplication of services. I would request that the superintendent complete an annual review of staffing assignments. Surplus should be eliminated; Huntsville needs to staff for effectiveness and efficiency. For example, Huntsville City Schools has , at last count, twelve social workers in the attendance office. Madison County Schools is presently performing the same using one social worker. While the County may be understaffed, I do not believe that it takes an additional eleven individuals to accomplish the job.

This is but one example of how I feel Huntsville City Schools could be held to higher accountability standards, while improving performance.

3. *What do you see as the most urgent needs for academic improvement in the school system and how would you address them?*
Basic needs must be addressed. If a student is not healthy, he or she is not going to be ready to learn. Once those basic needs are addressed, then the expectations

should be raised for all students. Lincoln Village is a perfect example of what can be accomplished. This takes planning and coordination, however. I do not see the city system offering this support at present. We have the knowledge, through scientific research, to offer the necessary services at all schools.

While addressing basic needs and skills, we must not lose sight of our high functioning/performing students. We need to ensure that these future leaders are provided with the educational, technological, and emotional/social support they need to succeed on a global level. This, too, is available for us today. We need to make certain that we are tapping the right resources to fully implement this support.

Finally, everyone I have spoken with in the communities I visit express concerns over discipline in our schools. I am appalled at the stories I have been told of student and teacher abuse. This must stop immediately. Students and their parents must be held accountable for good behavior in our schools. In turn, teachers should demonstrate respect for students and their parents. Again, we know that with proper intervention, this mutual respect can be achieved. We must take action, however, instead of ignoring the problem.

4. *How would you address the Huntsville City School system's need for new, improved and expanded facilities to accommodate current and expected growth? Do you support consolidation of some schools to reduce facility costs and maximize resources?* I would support immediate implementation of the Task Force recommendations for school consolidation. This is an excellent plan! I would also expect the superintendent to work more closely with the City Planning Commission in an effort to be proactive with the Capital Improvement Plan.
5. *Do you support implementation of Huntsville City Schools Strategic Plan developed by local citizens in 2000? Why or why not?* While the plan was a good beginning, I find that in many areas it is too vague. The Task Force gave us a specific plan with a proposed timeline for action. I would like to see the HCS Strategic Plan have more sustenance.
6. *What impact do you believe the quality of our local schools has on economic development and how can it be strengthened?* As I previously stated, I believe schools are the foundation of our communities. Communities with strong schools maintain healthy property values and encourage economic growth and prosperity for all. Job opportunities focus attention on Huntsville, strong schools attract families here.
7. *How important to you is full implementation of the Alabama Reading Initiative and Alabama Math, Science & Technology Initiative in Huntsville City Schools?* These are absolutely crucial! These initiatives are researched based, best practice techniques that reach the needs of all learners.

8. *What role do you see the business community playing in improving Huntsville City Schools? If we want to be a world class community, we must act as a community.* With involvement from all stakeholders, there is no reason why our schools cannot be number one in the state and in the region. Coordinated efforts such as what Hudson Alpha is doing at Columbia, should be the norm, not the exception.
9. *What can the school system do to improve workforce development and technical education for its students? Become more responsive to the needs of the employers.* We are, in many cases, offering the same “career center” courses we offered when I was in school, yet I cannot think of any job that is the same. We must ask the workforce to serve on curriculum committees to be responsive to the needs of the community.
10. *Would you support consolidation of any school services or facilities with other local school systems? If so would you consider a joint technical school, International Baccalaureate School, and/or at-risk school with Madison County and/or Madison schools? Do you see other opportunities for shared facilities or services?* I would welcome the opportunity to combine services. In my department of special education alone, I can only guess as to the savings. I feel that we could better meet the needs of all students if we had a consolidated service plan that offered centers of excellence in areas such as technology, medicine, engineering, etc. that were open to all students in the three systems.
11. *How would you compare the roles of superintendent and board members? How would you work to improve cooperation with other board members and the superintendent?* Technically, the board can only act on the recommendation of the superintendent. That being said, I think that the board can be extremely influential in helping the system reach a clearly defined goal. I have not heard a mission or goal expressed by this board or the superintendent. My plan is to give our superintendent the support and materials she needs to be successful. I would expect to have a clear vision and set of goals for all stakeholders to follow in order to meet this end.
12. *What in your opinion is the appropriate role of the Huntsville Education Association in strengthening local public education? Do you support collective bargaining for public school employees?* HEAs role is to support its constituents, teachers and staff who pay dues. I am regularly concerned that the Uniserv director has been given more power than is warranted, or desirable. In order to revive Huntsville City Schools, hard decisions will need to be made regarding ineffective teachers and staff. I expect that HEA will have strong feelings regarding those decisions. I feel it is the duty of the administration and the board to protect our children from ineffective, unmotivated teaching. I will take that responsibility seriously if elected to the board.
13. *Give an example when you believe you did the right thing, but the decision may have cost you votes.* Never having been elected before, I cannot answer this in its

literal sense. I will say that I fully support the Task Force recommendation for the consolidation of schools, despite the fact that many citizens in District Five spoke against this action at the public hearing. I think this is the right action for the board to take for Huntsville City Schools and I will stand by those recommendations during my campaign.