



An Open Letter To Educators And Friends of Education

From **Robbie Richardson**

Candidate for Alabama State House of Representatives, District 18
To Serve The Citizens Of Franklin And Colbert County

Dear Friends of Education,

*My name is Robbie Richardson and I am running for State Representative to serve the citizens of Franklin and Western Colbert County. **I am PRO-FAMILY! I SUPPORT EDUCATION!** And, you need to know that!*

*As an educator, a parent of a child or someone that is very concerned with our educational system, it is important for you to know where I stand on educational issues. As a citizen and a taxpayer, you should expect your State Representative to be **ACCESSIBLE, OPEN and HONEST** with you! You should expect and demand that your State Representative listen to you, return your calls and respond to your requests. You deserve nothing less than that. I want to be Your State Representative, to serve you and answer to you!*

*Our public educational system needs to be **FULLY FUNDED**. We should expect and demand that our Legislators come together at budget time and seriously address educational funding. Both parties have been guilty of trying to score political points, using education to take pop-shots at each other. The sad thing is that every year we get behind and nothing gets done. How many years have budget cutbacks forced school boards to layoff teachers? Here, in Alabama, we jokingly say that duct tape will fix anything. Well, it's not a joke when the education budget gets "duct taped" year after year. Our Children Deserve Better!*

Our teachers and educational staff deserve more competitive salaries. Every good educator, every good bus driver and every good staff member deserves every raise they get. We not only need well-paid teachers; we also need more teachers! Many students leave high school and go to college with the intention of becoming a teacher. Many of them want to become teachers simply because the best role model that they have had in life is one teacher that they really connected with and showed interest in them. It is sad that so many students get their first teaching job and have their dreams shattered because of pro-ration and budget cutbacks in Montgomery. Also, many of our new young teachers have to move to another state to get a job because they can't get one here. That needs to change. That must change. I want to work for you and with you to find a solution to make positive change!

*Many of our students could have a good-paying vocation. However, very few have been given the opportunity to learn one. Little by little our vocational-technical programs have eroded away. As part of our efforts to increase education funding, **we must drastically increase our commitment to vocational-technical education.** Our efforts in education must go hand-in-hand with our industrial development efforts. Our schools and existing industries must come together to prepare our students for the workplace. Not only should we try to recruit new industry, but also we must show our commitment to our existing industries. Eighty percent (80%) of all new job growth comes from existing industry. What are we doing for our existing industry? How are we helping them to grow and thus provide more opportunities for working families? Our students will need jobs after graduation and our industries need a trained workforce. Our high schools, colleges and industries must work together. We need to expand college credit courses in our high schools that include technical programs. Our industries should have a hand in that training. We need to look around and see what resources we have and what our needs are to give our children an advantage. Whether it is new agricultural technology courses taught at Vina, new woodworking technology taught at Phil Campbell, robotics taught at Red Bay, new industrial machinery courses taught at Colbert Heights, airplane mechanics taught at Russellville, modern electronics taught at Cherokee, or medical technology courses taught at Belgreen, we must gain a vision and develop educational curriculum that will equip our students, not just for college, but for life. These are only a few ideas.*

I want to hear your ideas. Let us sit down together and develop a vision, together. I want to work with you and for you to accomplish the best for our children!

*All of our technical programs should be made available to our working moms and dads. Many have suffered a loss due to the flow of jobs outside of our borders. **Adult education should be expanded and promoted!** Like many of you, I have a greater desire to learn more now than I did earlier in life. I have taken some Alabama Fire College courses, received my Emergency Medical Technician certification, and have taken other courses in the last few years, because I like helping people and want to learn more. None of us now have the guarantee that we will always have our job. Many of you, and many of our friends and neighbors, have lost their job and need options. If we increase our vocational-technical programs in our schools, we will lay the groundwork for greater adult education opportunities. I want to work with you and for you to see that our working moms and dads have every opportunity to provide for their families!*

*In a few weeks, you will see a student, a child, a grandchild, a niece or nephew, or a child you know go across a stage to receive a high school diploma. I will be watching my daughter go across the same stage that I did many years ago. I will be proud and sad at the same time. What is sad is to look at that group of graduates and realize that only about half of them will go to college. And, of the ones that do go to college, only about half of them will finish. Then, most of our college graduates will leave here and never come back because we have failed to provide opportunities here at home. We will not get to see our grandchildren grow up or only get to see them during the holidays. **What about the 75% of the kids that do not get a college degree? What have we done for them?** I want to work with you and for you to give ALL of our children better opportunities!*

*I am a product of the good educational system that we have here. My dad graduated from Belgreen. My mom graduated from Russellville. As a child, I enjoyed summer the most because I got to “go to the country.” My granddad’s farm was between Burnout and Belgreen; I loved playing, hunting and all the other stuff that I couldn’t do at home. My granddad never bought a car or learned to drive, so some neighbor would come “take us to town” to go to the store in Red Bay. I graduated from Russellville High School. I went to Northwest Junior College. I worked at Wal-Mart during school and got a better job at Southern Accounting Systems, so I have been there ever since. I was elected to the Russellville City Council in 2000. We accomplished a lot of good things for our city employees and took care of our retirees. Previous administrations had sent a lump sum appropriation to our school system for the prior year’s sales tax proceeds and kept the interest. We began sending a monthly check and never took any money away from the school system! We tried to make sure that all segments of our constituency were represented on the school board while appointing school board members that cared about our children. During this time, our county and cities came together to start our county industrial recruitment effort. We came together with Emergency Management, law enforcement, fire departments and county rescue teams to form our Franklin County Dive Team so that we could help families gain closure after a tragedy. I still serve as a diver with our team. Also, during my tenure, the mayor put me in charge of the Fire Department. I worked with our Senator and County Fire Association to obtain a Fire Safety Trailer for education. Now, every child in Franklin County has an opportunity to learn about fire safety. During Fire Safety Week, our children can experience what it is like to be in a smoke-filled room and learn how to escape. I enjoyed working with the fire department and I decided not to seek re-election. I loved it so much, that at the last meeting before I left office, my fellow council members appointed me as a Volunteer Firefighter. This past year my fellow firefighters honored me as “Firefighter of the Year-2005.” I am an active member at Calvary Baptist Church. I am the treasurer for the Franklin County Baptist Association. I am involved in Disaster Relief Missions. I have worked many ballgames in the concession stand as a band parent. The greatest joy I get in life is when I work to help others. I want to work to help you and all of our children and neighbors as **YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE**. I humbly request your **VOTE** and **SUPPORT** in the **Democratic Primary on June 6th** to serve you and all of our neighbors in Franklin and Colbert County!*

Sincerely, **Robbie Richardson**

Please email me at campaign@Robbie4Rep.com or call me with your concerns at (256) 349-0491!