

Hugh Blackwell to Run for North Carolina House

*Local Attorney, WPCC Trustee and Former Board of Education Member
Pledges to Work Hard to Improve Burke County's Economy*

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Hugh Blackwell, Burke County attorney, current trustee at Western Piedmont Community College and former member of the Burke County Board of Education, announced today that he will file next week as a candidate for Burke County's 86th District seat in the North Carolina House of Representatives. Blackwell, a 63-year old Republican, was a candidate in 2006 and drew 48.5% of the vote in his first campaign for the seat. In announcing his intention to be a candidate again this year, Blackwell stated: "I was pleased to have done so well with my first effort. Since then I've continued to receive even more encouragement and support. The people of Burke County are hungry for new leadership to help create more economic opportunity, improve our schools and change the culture at our state capital. My professional and community experience uniquely qualify me to be a bold, new voice for change in the state House."

"I want to serve Burke County in the North Carolina House because I believe we need to do better in bringing economic development and good jobs to our area," Blackwell said. "By working together with business leaders, economic development professionals and government agencies, we can protect our existing jobs and bring new businesses to Burke County. However, local efforts are unlikely to be as successful as we need until our legislators in Raleigh stop passing out political favors to their friends and instead create the state-wide business climate, quality education and improved road and water systems that will attract the sort of economic growth we need here in Burke County and across the state."

"As a former vice chairman and eight-year member of the board of education, I know that the greatest hope of building Burke County's economy is quality education for our children," Blackwell continued. "That's why I fought to establish the reduced class size programs in our early grades in Burke County's schools. Also, as a part of my service on the Board of Trustees at Western Piedmont Community College, I am very much aware of how essential it is to have readily available, highly effective retraining programs when workers are displaced. For that reason, support of our community college is critical. As a state representative, I will work hard for every Burke County worker to have a chance at a stable job with good pay and benefits. That includes the effective, proper support for education that is critical in meeting our economic and job goals."

In discussing his reasons for seeking a seat in North Carolina's House of Representatives, Blackwell said: "I continue to believe that our state and Burke County urgently need new leadership in Raleigh. Problems of healthcare cost and access, loss of jobs, poor tax policy and continued educational failures- such as the persistent drop out problem- demand new approaches and new leadership. There is no reason to believe that sending the same people back to Raleigh to pursue their same policies and practices for another 16 or 20 years will suddenly produce different results. I will work hard to bring the kind of new leadership to Raleigh that can help bring the improvements that we'd all like to see. During the course of the upcoming campaign, I look forward to discussing with Burke County citizens their concerns, the needs of our state and county, and my ideas and qualifications."

Blackwell's qualifications uniquely position him to serve in the North Carolina House. A native North Carolinian, Blackwell has practiced law in Burke County since 1973. During that time, he has been a leader in a variety of other civic leadership roles, including serving twice as a vice president of the Burke County Chamber of Commerce, volunteer legal counsel and board member in the founding of Hospice of Burke County, and trustee and former vice chairman of Valdese General Hospital. Though his children have graduated, he has continued to work as a volunteer with the high school athletic booster club as he did when they were all active year round in sports. As a parent of four swimmers, he also served twice as president of the Valdese Swim Team.

Hugh Blackwell holds an A.B. Degree with Highest Honors in Economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a law degree from Harvard Law School. While at Chapel Hill, Blackwell was elected to membership in Phi Beta Kappa, the national scholastic honorary, the Order of the Old Well, the Order of the Golden Fleece and received an award as one of four Frank Porter Graham Outstanding Seniors in his graduating class. He is an attorney with the firm of Mitchell, Blackwell, and Mitchell in Valdese, has served on BB&T's Burke County advisory board and has served as an adjunct professor of Business Ethics and Business Law at Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory.

Hugh and Ann Blackwell have been married for 34 years. They have four grown children- Tod, Peter, Michael and Bridget- each of whom graduated from Burke County schools, and three grandsons- Tommy (a kindergartener at Valdese Elementary), Hampton and Blaine. The Blackwells are active in Faith Community Church where he teaches an adult Sunday School class, is a choir member and has chaired the church's planning committee.