

## Candidate Biographies

**John Paul Jones**, a 72-year-old former power lifter from Mobile, worked in the Mobile City Engineering Department, completing his B.S. degree in Industrial Psychology at the University of South Alabama (USA). He then worked for the Mobile County Public School System, completing his M.Ed. in Guidance and Counseling at USA. He did postgraduate work at the University of Alabama and Auburn University. Mr. Jones served on the MCEA Board for 20+ years, twice as president, and on the Alabama Education Association (AEA) Board. In the Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA), he served two terms as District Director and President. He served as AERA, AREA III West Coordinator. He was elected AEA and NEA Convention Delegate for 39 years. Mr. Jones was inducted into the Alabama Senior Hall of Fame in 2013 and is an active volunteer for AARP in South Alabama. He represented House District 97 in the Alabama Silver Hair Legislature. Mr. Jones joined the Civil Air Patrol as a Cadet in 1963, became a pilot in 1995, and currently holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He received numerous awards as Aerospace Education Officer and Squadron Commander. He's an actor/singer involved in several theaters, receiving several awards since 1973.

**Dr. Donna Lynn Dyess** attended public schools in Mobile County, then started college at the University of South Alabama (USA). She transferred to Auburn University to attend pharmacy school. After receiving a B.S. in Pharmacy, she attended medical school at USA. Upon graduation, Dr. Dyess started her residency in surgery at the University of Louisville (Kentucky), then returned to Mobile to complete her residency at USA. After completing a fellowship in Burns/Critical Care at USA, she joined the USA Department of Surgery faculty where she worked for her entire career. This faculty position included teaching surgical residents, medical students, and Allied Health students. In 2015, Dr. Dyess graduated from USA with an MBA. Since retirement, she has continued to work as a physician and educator. During her entire career, she has been allowed to serve and practice medicine in different formats in addition to her faculty role at USA. Some of these opportunities include disaster medicine (continental US and foreign countries), physician volunteer at a clinic serving uninsured patients, participation with ABCCEDP (program that provides care for underfunded women with breast disease/cancer), assistant medical director for Mobile Fire Department EMS, and foreign medical missions (more than 20 trips to Honduras).

**Mr. Bobby W. Jackson** served 42 years as an educator in Alabama's public education system before retiring in 2016 from Madison City Schools (MCS). He earned a Bachelor's Degree from St. Bernard in 1974, and a Master's Degree in 1978 from the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB). His career began in 1974, teaching English and physical education, and coaching boys' basketball. Mr. Jackson went on to coach a variety of other sports. On four occasions, he was awarded the distinct honor of Coach of the Year. In 2004, he was selected Athletic Director of the Year from the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA). Mr. Jackson spent 28 years teaching and coaching. The remaining 14 years were spent serving as an Administrator in the Central Office for MCS. At MCS, he supervised Athletics, Transportation, Safety, Attendance, Safe & Drug Free Schools, and served as the Hearing Officer. He has been an active member of AAPASS for 17 years and, for the last nine years, served as Treasurer.

**Anita Gibson** is a leader and education advocate who retired in 2015 with 27 years of service. She currently serves on the National Education Association (NEA)/Alabama Education Association (AEA) Boards as Retired Director, District 2 Director on the AERA Board, Vice President, membership chair/program chair of the DeKalb Education Retirees Association, delegate to the Retired National Conference/NEA-RA, member of the National Retired Leadership Summit Planning, NEA-Retired Communications and NEA-Retired Distinguished Retiree Award Selection Committees. While an active member, Mrs. Gibson served the members of AEA on the AEA Board of Directors; the NEA Board of Directors; two terms AEA Vice President and two terms AEA President. She has taught all subjects in grades K-5. She holds an Associate Degree from Northeast Alabama Community College, a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Jacksonville State University (JSU), a Master's in Elementary Education from the University of Alabama. Mrs. Gibson received the 2002 AEA Teaching Excellence Award, 2002 National Horace Mann/NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, finalist for the National Education Teaching Excellence Award, 2003 North Alabama Girl Scouts Woman of Distinction – Outstanding Educator, June 2003 JSU "Gem of the Hills" Alumni Spotlight and 2004 Who's Who Among America's Outstanding Teachers.

## Candidate Biographies (Cont.)

**Mr. Larry Ryland** has six academic degrees from four colleges in Alabama, including an A.A., A.S., A.A.S., B.S. in Business Administration, M.Ed. in Higher Education, Ed.S. in Higher Education Administration. He has been awarded Administrator of the Year twice and received a gold medal from the Governor for his contributions in the state. Mr. Ryland has received numerous awards for work done including 100% pass rate of students.

**Mr. Joe Ward**, the incumbent, received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and Master's Degree in Administration and Supervision from Mississippi State University. He worked as a teacher in Mississippi and Florida, as association staff in Florida, Kansas, Alabama, and with the National Education Association (NEA). Mr. Ward served as Director of Field Services and President for the Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA), as well as on the Board of Directors for the Alabama Education Association (AEA). He has served two terms on the Teachers' Retirement System Board of Control. He is a registered lobbyist in Florida, Kansas, and Alabama. He served on the Governor's Commission of Education in Florida, and on numerous other committees and commissions. Mr. Ward is politically active in educational issues.

**Dr. James H. Hethcox** received the following degrees from the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB): B.A. in English with a minor in Philosophy in 1971; M.Ed. in English Education, Rank 1, in 1977; M.Ed. in Gifted Education, Rank 1, in 1983; and English Education, Rank A, in 1984. Dr. Hethcox received his Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration from Auburn University in 1990, where he designed the Higher Education Economic Development Survey (HEEDS) and conducted a national study of higher education's role in economic development. A factor analysis of the survey recommendations became the basis of his doctoral dissertation. In 1994, he received a Master of Community Planning from Auburn University, where his post-doctoral study focused on developing and implementing a strategic policy management plan to foster economic development while exploring the role of geographical information systems (GIS) to convey that information. Dr. Hethcox received his J.D. as an Honors Graduate from the Birmingham School of Law in 2004.

**Mr. Richard "Dickie" Brown**, a native of Lee County, is a graduate of Smiths Station High School. He received a B.S. Degree in Physical Education and Biology from Jacksonville State University, a Master's Degree in Administration from Troy University, and a Specialist Degree in Administration from Auburn University. He recently retired with 50 years in education – 10 years as coach and teacher and 40 years as principal of Beauregard High School in the Lee County School System. He actively served on the AASSP Board for 24 years, CLAS Board for 13 years, and Executive CLAS Board for four years with one year as CLAS President. Mr. Brown served on the AHSAA Legislative Council for ten years and AHSAA Central Board of Control for eight years. On the national level, he served as NASSP State Coordinator for eight years and four years on the NASSP Board of Directors. Mr. Brown served on the TRS Board of Control for six years. Honors he has received include: State Principal of the Year (2006), AHSAA Making a Difference Award (2013), Smiths Station Hall of Fame (2006), BHS football field named Richard L. Brown Field (2006), and Alabama High School Sports Hall of Fame (2014).

**Mr. Jimmie L. Robinson** is a native of Birmingham. He graduated from Lawson State Community College with a certificate in brick masonry in 1979. He served 16 years as City Councilman of Midfield. Mr. Robinson served on the Finance Committee and has many years of dealing with budgeting and finance. He is a member of an outreach delivery ministry at his church. Mr. Robinson is a historian and collector, having donated part of his collection to museums and colleges in Alabama, Louisiana, and California.