

**SENATOR JEFF WENTWORTH**  
SENATE DISTRICT 25



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SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE  
2008 - 2009

AUSTIN  
Capitol Building, Room 1E.9  
P. O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711  
(512) 463-0125  
Toll-Free (888) 824-6984  
FAX (512) 463-7794  
Dial 711 for Relay Calls

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INTERNET E-MAIL  
jeff.wentworth@senate.state.tx.us

SAN ANTONIO  
1250 N. E. Loop 410, Suite 925  
San Antonio, Texas 78209  
(210) 826-7800  
FAX (210) 826-0571

June 6, 2010

COUNTIES IN  
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Mr. Ron Blatchley  
Chairman, TSUS Board of Regents  
3019 Hickory Ridge Circle  
Bryan, Texas 77807

Dear Chairman Blatchley:

Since the Board of Regents' unexpected selection of Rep. Brian McCall as the new Chancellor of the Texas State University System (TSUS), I have been asked repeatedly by people in the know how in the world this happened. And I have no satisfactory answer for them.

This is not a letter I initially intended to write, but so many people have expressed to me both surprise and genuine disappointment at the action of the board that I feel obligated, especially in view of the increasing number of Texans demanding transparency and accountability from their government, to give the board an opportunity to explain their selection at the conclusion of what appears to many of us in hindsight not to have been a "fair and square" competition.

Of the 38 applicants, one of the two finalists was a former TSUS regent; former state representative; current state senator who had successfully advocated for two TSUS institutions located in his senate district, one for eight years and another for an additional seven years; chairman of four Senate committees during a 10-year period; former member of Senate Finance Committee; father of two sons who attended a TSUS institution (one still enrolled there); a recognized leader with a track record of actually working for the system over a period of years; author of the bill that changed the name of the largest component in the TSUS from "Southwest Texas State University" to "Texas State University-San Marcos," the most transformational event on that campus in the past quarter century; "father" of the TEXAS grant program which has funded **\$1.4 billion** in tuition and fees to **240,000 Texas undergraduates**; author of the legislative language that added one non-



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voting student regent to every board of regents in Texas, including the TSUS; Acting Governor of Texas twice in 2004; a lifelong resident in the part of Texas that the TSUS primarily serves; an adjunct professor at UT San Antonio with a doctorate of jurisprudence; and who was personally recommended by the Lt. Governor of Texas, the chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, every state senator representing the ten campuses from South to West to Central to East Texas, and a host of others in both the Texas Senate and House of Representatives who have a significant say about the future of the TSUS, not to mention four university system chancellors and several former chairs of the TSUS Board of Regents.

The second finalist was a retiring state representative; an adjunct professor at UT Dallas with a doctorate of philosophy who had written a book about Texas governors; one of *Texas Monthly's* "ten best legislators" in 2009; chairman of the House Calendars Committee for one year; founder of Empowerment Project, Inc., a nonprofit that has sent more than **\$10 million** worth of math and science textbooks to **needy students in South Africa**; co-sponsor of legislation that put seven institutions of higher education in Texas on track to Tier One status, none of which are in TSUS; and no track record of service to or interest in TSUS until the job of Chancellor came open.

Frankly, Ron, I'm more than a little disappointed and puzzled; I'm personally offended that my significant and sustained support of and advocacy for higher education and the system for many years apparently count for so little in the minds of the Board of Regents.

I remember quite clearly a conversation you and I had in your box in "The Zone" at Kyle Field last fall where you told me "You'd be perfect" as Chancellor (an obvious exaggeration, but a sentiment I was nonetheless happy to hear).

I believe that my years of service to the TSUS as a regent, a state senator, a parent and a financial supporter make me deserving of a better explanation for my being passed over than "you had a great interview this morning, but the board has decided to go in a different direction," the only official explanation ever given me.

And by the way, when I was asked during my interview what my biggest shortcoming was, I truthfully responded that time after time peers, colleagues and my own staff have constructively criticized me by

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saying things like "you're picky beyond belief" or that I'm a perfectionist. Of course, I prefer to think of it as attention to detail.

With that in mind, I'd point out that the minutes of the TSUS Board of Regents meeting at the Houston Airport Marriott on March 24, 2010, and now approved by the board as the official record of what transpired at that board meeting indicate an unusual practice – that of letting one regent vote twice on the same motion while not counting at all the vote of the regent who made the motion in the first place.

According to the minutes that were approved by the board, Regent Trisha Pollard made a motion to name Brian McCall as the finalist to be Chancellor. Motion seconded by Regent Montagne. Immediate roll call vote does not indicate any vote at all for Regent Pollard – not "yea," "nay," "present not voting," or "absent" – even though she made the motion. According to the minutes, she simply vanishes from the meeting.

And yet Regent Amato is allowed to vote twice – once as vice chairman of the board, and then again as a regular regent.

Anybody on system staff proofread the minutes?

Maybe attention to detail is not such a bad thing after all.

As for the actual vote taken by the board on April 19, I find it particularly noteworthy that the motion to name Rep. McCall as Chancellor was made by *the only voting regent who was not present for the final interviews* of the last six remaining contenders. (I was told that he was fishing in South America.) That's like allowing a member to make the motion to approve the minutes of a meeting that he did not attend.

And, immediately after the vote was taken, this same regent announced his resignation from the board of regents effective the following day. It's simply an ironic and stunning symbol of this whole selection process that cannot be overlooked.

But I digress.

In conversations with several regents since the selection of Rep. McCall, I've been given varied reasons for his selection:

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First, the "litmus test" for one regent was that Rep. McCall had a doctorate of philosophy while I had "only" a doctorate of jurisprudence. No matter that not one of the university system chancellors of the UT System, the A&M System, the Texas Tech System or the UNT System has a doctorate of philosophy – and yet all seem to be getting what they need out of the Legislature more effectively than the TSUS. And that the Texas Tech Chancellor and I share exactly the same degree – and that the UNT Chancellor does not have a doctorate of any kind.

Second, another regent really could not articulate why McCall was selected over me and suggested that had I been the fifth interviewee of the day (as McCall was) instead of first (as I was), the decision may well have come out differently.

And third, still another regent indicated that McCall's thinking about the future of the system since he first learned last summer about Chancellor Matthews' resignation plans and his expressed "passion" for TSUS during the interview was the determining factor for that regent, evidencing to me that apparently one sixty-minute interview can make up for a previous history of no interest in the system and also outweigh a couple of decades of proven leadership and service to the system.

Please tell me, Ron, what it was about Rep. McCall's experience or qualifications or merit that outweighed my years of tested service and demonstrated effectiveness on behalf of higher education and the TSUS.

And, in view of the indisputable fact that the whole purpose of replacing the previous Chancellor was to improve the system's relations and standing with the Legislature, exactly how does disregarding the personal recommendations of the Lt. Governor of Texas and the chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, among many others, help to achieve that goal rather than being directly counterproductive to it?

While I appreciate your email to me that "it was a very difficult decision and it could have easily gone your way," and from another regent that "I thought your answers were extraordinary, thoughtful and quite candid," and from still another regent that "the fact that you considered the Chancellor position is in itself a shining moment for the Texas State University System," the fact remains that the board still picked McCall.

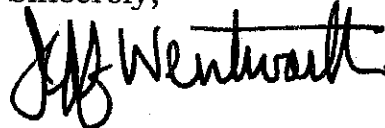
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In retrospect, it's pretty obvious from any objective standpoint that experience, qualifications and merit were secondary considerations in this selection process. As a friend of mine suggested, if I ever write my autobiography, this experience in my life deserves a chapter entitled "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished."

From my standpoint, y'all threw overboard a loyal, tried and true, longtime member of the crew in favor of (please pardon my unvarnished candor) a Johnny-come-lately opportunist.

As a reminder, my personal mailing address is [REDACTED]; my personal email address is [REDACTED] and my personal cell phone number is [REDACTED]. I would welcome a response from you and any other member of the board.

Sincerely,



Jeff Wentworth

Enclosures

xc: TSUS Board of Regents et al