

THE CONCERNED CITIZEN

Exposing the hard truth about Franklin County

CONCERNING ISSUE 4

The Ruling Elite

What are the best jobs in our county? One in five employees in Franklin County is employed by a governmental entity. But the really best jobs belong to our elected officials. Their hourly pay is higher and benefits are better compared to the private sector.

Our County Commissioners and School Board members 'earn' more than \$24,000 per year for very part-time work. (Some attend only one meeting a month, which may last only a few hours. Some fail to prepare ahead for the important decisions which may arise on their agendas!) City officials are also paid and receive above-average benefits. Elected officials receive retirement contributions as high as 33.03% a year, largely paid by taxpayers! We also see double dippers; those employees of a government organization also holding a Franklin County elected position which means double benefits including two fully paid health insurance and retirement programs.

Some public leadership roles allow family, friends and supporters to be rewarded with patronage jobs. That's the very definition of corruption.

"Political corruption is the use of power by government officials for illegitimate private gain. An illegal act by an officeholder constitutes political corruption only if the act is directly related to their official duties, is done under color of law or involves trading in influence. Forms of corruption vary, but include bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement."

Sound familiar? It isn't right, but it happens! Corruption may occur without convictable criminal or civil violations, but too often, behaviors and actions here fail to pass the bad-smell test. Local government employees have been hired based on family ties, without appropriate public advertising of position, without proper qualification reviews or strict enforcement of job requirements. Documented thefts of money and material from local government



DID YOU KNOW? FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS 'EARN' MORE THAN \$24,000 PER YEAR FOR THEIR PART-TIME POSITIONS.

agencies have gone unpunished, sometimes without restitution demanded or made, and employees have not always lost their jobs. Special favors of information or gifts of real estate have also been made to public officials.

Elected officials are like us; good and bad, honest and dishonest. But, elected officials are our leaders and we have the right to hold them to a higher standard. We should expect that they can speak, read and write the English language, that they understand finances commensurate with the budgets they plan to manage, that they study the needs of their electorate, take advantage of available professional educational opportunities and always put the well-being of 'their' citizens ahead of any personal or family gain. They should not create a powerbase designed to insulate them from criticism and/or to provide financial and ongoing support to ensure reelection. And, they should never use their power in ways that result in higher costs, or create consequences harmful to their citizens.

Franklin County is not as bad as some counties or as good as others. But Franklin County is our county and our elected leaders have failed us. In most ratings, Franklin County compares unfavorably with state-wide norms. Our citizens are poorer, more unhealthy, are less educated and have a higher incarceration rate. Ignorance and poverty should not be lifetime aspirational goals! The CCFC bemoaned the county's economic fortunes at a School Board meeting, faulting the failing education system. A School

Board member ignorantly protested: "We're not responsible for economic progress; you can't hang that on us."

To the contrary, every elected leader has a dog in that hunt and the responsibility for bettering our county. There should be more to elected office than picking the best meat off the bones for personal or family enrichment.

Putting this truth in front of you has become the role of the Concerned Citizens organization.

Turning out these corrupt rascals at the polls is the voters' ultimate responsibility. Some of your leaders are playing a shell game with your future. Just as in that well-known slight-of-hand scheme, Franklin County voters must keep focused on the real issues, not what magic is promised or 'justified' with this or that "free" money grant or new tax levy.

Ask yourself... what does a good future in Franklin County look like? How will it happen unless our leaders represent all of us instead of their own self-interests?

When will they take responsibility for the actual outcomes they engineer? Let your elected leaders know what you expect of them and then demand accountability. We must all hold them responsible if and when their actions hurt us and the business of our county. The CCFC will continue to do so. Will you join us to help make our county leadership better?

CONCERNED CITIZENS OF FRANKLIN COUNTY, INC.

P.O. Box 990
Eastpoint, Florida 32328
AllanF@DEC-International.com
ABetterFranklin.com
(850) 653-5571

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