

July 18, 2008

Commissioner Mike Walker  
244 Hesse Creek Road  
Walland, TN 37886



Dear Commissioner Walker:

**Blount Countians for Educational Excellence** is a recently-formed grassroots citizens group comprised of business, community, and educational leaders who have a passion for encouraging greater investment in the educational growth of Blount County and the cities within it.

We respectfully request your support in adding a county referendum to the Nov. 4, 2008 general election ballot that would allow registered voters to decide on supporting a half cent local sales tax increase, changing the current rate of 2.25% to 2.75%. Funds raised through this initiative would go back to our educational systems in Blount County and the cities within it. Please understand that we are not asking for your public endorsement of a local sales tax increase, but rather an endorsement to allow voters to exercise the right to voice their opinion on this significant matter.

The importance of voting on this issue cannot be understated. Our preliminary calculations indicate that an estimated \$7 million can be raised each year to help benefit our educational system in the county and cities. With several new capital projects either planned or underway, coupled with the continual need for technology upgrades, a half cent increase can be of exceptional help. Additionally, with Blount County's plentiful tourism industry we can spread the burden to the many guests and visitors who either work or play in our area – we estimate that 40% of the local sales tax is collected from people who do not live in our county and respective cities.

Quite simply, we feel that a **half a cent is money well spent.**

Below is a list of business, community, and educational leaders who agree that 1) our educational systems could benefit from a steadier stream of funding, and 2) the voters should be granted the opportunity to vote on this very important issue.

Thank you, in advance, for considering our request. If additional information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact Steve West at 681-5300 or by email at [yesforeducation@halfacent.org](mailto:yesforeducation@halfacent.org).

Sincerely,

Steve West  
Maryville Resident  
Blount Countians for Educational Excellence

C. Randy Massey  
Louisville Resident, Alcoa and Maryville business owner  
Blount Countians for Educational Excellence

...and members of Blount Countians for Educational Excellence: Jerome Moon, Monica Gawet, Jeff McCall, Herb Meyer, Donna Alexander, Shirley Carr-Clowney, Barbara Jenkins, Dr. Mike Dalton, Galen Johnson, Don Story, Don Boring, Bill Clabough.

cc: Alvin Hord, Stephanie Thompson, Tom Shamblyn, Blount County Board of Education, Maryville Board of Education, Alcoa Board of Education, Blount County Schools Principals, Maryville City Schools Principals, Alcoa City Schools Principals, Alcoa Board of Commissioners, Maryville City Council