

42 FOR BETTER SCHOOLS

Nov. 4, 2015

To the Supporters of Initiative 42 and All Proponents of Public Education:

As another school day began this morning, the 500,000 candidates for whom we fought in the campaign for Initiative 42 took their seats in classrooms across Mississippi. The majority of those candidates were probably unaware that they'd just lost a battle for full funding of their public schools. Likewise, they probably did not know that their campaign was just beginning.

Unlike a traditional political campaign, Tuesday night saw no winners. Certainly not the supporters of the constitutional amendment to force the Legislature to abide by its own 1997 school funding law. And most definitely not the opponents of Initiative 42, at least not from the perspective of the half a million students -- those candidates -- whose educational environments remain exactly the same today as they did yesterday.

Of the approximately 640,000 Mississippi voters who cast ballots on Tuesday -- one of the lowest turnouts in state history -- only about 25,000 more people voted against the amendment than voted for it. So no matter who claims "victory," our Legislature must now heed the call to do more to improve our public schools. Either that, or simply ignore the wishes of more than 300,000 of their citizens.

With power comes tremendous responsibility, and those who control the legislative process have a larger duty to serve all the people, not just those who agree with their political ideology. As the saying goes, character is how you treat those who can do nothing for you.

As we reflect on Tuesday's results, the 42 For Better Schools Campaign offers no excuses and assigns no blame for not reaching the numbers required to adopt the constitutional amendment. Did the Legislature's alternative measure create the confusion they wanted to defeat 42? Of course it did. Would 42 have passed if the vote had been a straight-up yes or no decision without the alternative? Most likely.

So many factors play into any political campaign and this one had more than most. It was an uphill climb from the start, but that was the point -- to start the process to guarantee adequate and full funding for our students and their public schools. And so the battle continues.

The volatility and rancor on both sides of this issue over the past few months only underscores its importance and the need to continue working to make a difference. While this battle wages, we hope that somewhere in the wings lies the opportunity for cooperation from both sides.

We are all Mississippians. And our candidates will always be our children.

Jonathan Compretta

Michael Rejebian

Co-Managers, 42 For Better Schools