


# POST MODERN

January 20, 1998

Volume II, Issue IV

## Future President?

A black and white portrait of J.C. Watts Jr., a young man with short hair, wearing a suit and tie, smiling slightly. The background is a stylized American flag with stars and stripes.

**Congressman  
J.C. Watts Jr.,  
R-OK, is a  
prominent,  
young articulate  
advocate of  
equal education  
in the inner  
cities and may  
be well on his  
way to living in  
the White  
House.**

**ALSO INSIDE:  
LITERALLY SPEAK-  
ING, ARE HIGH  
SCHOOL STUDENTS  
READING THE RIGHT  
BOOKS TO PREPARE  
THEMSELVES FOR  
COLLEGE?**

**NH, ONE YEAR  
AFTER FAILING TO  
ACKNOWLEDGE  
MARTIN LUTHER  
KING DAY.**

**BLACK HISTORY  
MONTH EVENTS TO  
BE HELD AT MTSU.**

**J.C. WATTS JR.**

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Are high-school students really reading the right books to prepare them for the transition to college? *Post Modern* examines required reading lists from area schools - What's on them might surprise you.

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Former high-school principle Joe Clark highlights the events on campus surrounding African-American History Month.

Clark was the inspiration for the Warner Bros. film *Lean On Me*.

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Linonel Washington Johnson shares his thoughts, one year after New Hampshire dissed Martin Luther King Jr. for the third time. Johnson is the only black legislator in New Hampshire. A state that at 402 members has the largest number of legislators.

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In the last year, J.C. Watts Jr. has turned more than a few heads. Could he be destined to be the first black president to live in the White House?

Even if the congressman never moves his family to Pennsylvania Avenue, Watts is still making quite a name for himself and his quest to gain support for his school voucher bill.

*Sidelines* is the non-profit, editorially independent student newspaper of Middle Tennessee State University and is published every Wednesday during June and July and every Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters. The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual writers and not necessarily *Sidelines* or the university.



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# Literally, do high schools need help?

**When Sumner County schools director Merrol Hyde feebly argued last week *Brave New World* and *Catch 22* might violate state**

obscenity laws (a ridiculous charge dismissed by most of the community and turned down by the school board), the hubbub brought back into the limelight the tacit dogma of high-school literary education: the required reading list.

For decades, high-school students have been saturated with these lists. Teachers give them one at the beginning of each school year. After Christmas break, teachers pass out more. And at the end of spring, teachers cruelly hand out yet more lists to occupy their students' time over what could have been (at least in some students' perceptions) refreshing summer months. The process repeats itself year after year as an academic grist mill.

However, except for the anecdotal assaults by Hyde and other media-hungry officials, most reading lists are left alone by the general public. Parents seem to trust the teachers. And high-school teachers trust their own judgments. But are the books high schoolers read preparing them for universities like MTSU? Or has something gone literally awry in their education?

*Post Modern* obtained copies of several area high-school reading lists (both from public schools and private schools, including magnet schools) to see what books students in the Mid-State are reading.

Some counties, for example Rutherford and Williamson, have county-wide approved lists from which teachers at various public schools must select for each grade level. Teachers in these counties can also appeal to the school board to have certain

books not on the list approved.

Other counties, like Metro-Davidson, have no master list whatsoever and teachers are allowed almost complete discretion to select required reading. These schools, however, usually set up their own in-house list to avoid redundancy between grade levels.

Private schools, of course, set their own curriculum. (Magnet schools are included with private schools because of their similar curriculums.)

From *Post Modern's* examination, public-school teachers tend to select a larger proportion of contemporary authors - like Toni Morrison and Mary Stewart - compared to private-/ magnet-school teachers falling back on the classics of Aeschylus and Cervantes. (see graph)

**What's your purpose for required reading? To read a difficult book - to struggle - or to let high-school students learn about themselves**

Jan Hayes

Neither extreme is good, professors here say, but whether reading more contemporary authors is better than reading the staple classics is an ambiguous debate. Both have value, professors say.

Jan Hayes, a specialist in K-12 literature, says high-school students are well prepared for college. "However, not in the ways college teachers want them to be."

During the 70s and 80s, young adult books flooded the markets, she says, long past most college teachers' scope of daily reading material, and the new higher-education students are not reading the same books as their soon-to-be mentors.

"English teachers haven't been prepared in

contemporary literature," Hayes says, adding most are "very limited" in young adult literature.

"What's your purpose for required reading?" she asks, "To read a difficult book - to struggle - or to let high-school students learn about themselves?"

"Are they building sophistication about themselves?"

Conceding the necessity of certain sacred cow classics in high-school education (like Shakespeare), Hayes immediately adds to the list (from the top of her head, no less) several contemporary authors, such as Lowry and Patterson, Brooks and Paulson, as necessary ingredients for a "healthy mixture."

"We're trying to get kids to think," she says. "What appeals to them are books about themselves."

Honors program chair John Montgomery, soon to be head of the honors college here, complains some high-school teachers are trying to get students to read books they just can't "comprehend" yet.

"I just can't imagine teaching *Moby Dick* to a 16-year-old kid," Montgomery says. "I wouldn't put it in the hands of children - it's a frightening book."

In addition to *Moby Dick*, Melville's infamous tale of the great white whale, Montgomery adds *King Lear* and *Oedipus Rex* (along with a few more), fretting students are reading too much classical literature too soon.

He argues whether they truly understand what they are reading - and he worries they won't ever read the classics again.

"If you read *King Lear* four or five times, you find something different every time," he says. "I'm worried [high-school students] will not go back to it after they've read it once."

Complicated literature is the foundation of most private-/ magnet-school reading lists. For instance, take this sample of senior-level summer reading from the University School of Nashville: Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*; Cervantes, *Don Quixote, Part 1*; Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*; Flaubert,

*Madame Bovary*; Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; and Kafka, *The Trial*.

Of course, students there are not required to read all of the above-listed books. But chances are they will have to read one or more over the summer. Compared to Rutherford's county-wide reading lists for senior-level English - with accessible books like *Frankenstein* and *Grendel* not included on USN's list - the private-/magnet-school lists seem unbearably difficult. And this difficulty, Montgomery and Hayes argue, is defeating the purpose of college-preparatory education.

But public schools are not the safe way to go for college-preparatory reading

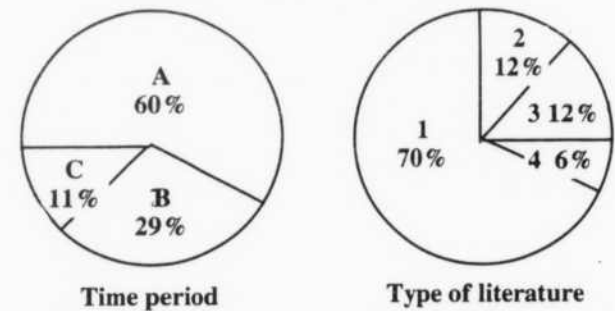
written by  
**Gregg Mayer**

lists either. On some public-school lists, *Forrest Gump*, the tale of America's favorite idiot turned movie star, and the lawyer mysteries of John Grisham come up. Perhaps worse, students have the opportunity to select "any" biography or autobiography they want as a required reading selection, which includes the soon-to-be-released *Long Hard Road Out of Hell* by the self-proclaimed auto-erotic master himself Marilyn Manson.

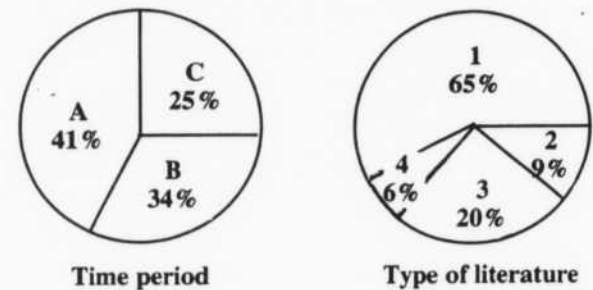
The latitude of these lists can be frightening. But it is exactly what high-school

**Story concludes, Page 6**

**Required reading breakdown\*  
Public high schools**



**Required reading breakdown  
Private/ magnet high schools\*\***



**Graph Key**

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| A- 1900 to present | 1- Novels      |
| B- 1800 to 1900    | 2- Biographies |
| C- 1000BC to 1800  | 3- Plays       |
|                    | 4- Poetry      |

\* Source: 20 area high-school and county-wide reading lists.

\*\*Magnet schools are included with private schools because of their similar curriculums.

Graphic by Keith Ryan Cartwright

# Could he be a future President?

**H**e's young, black, a major congressional proponent of equal education, an advocate of restoring traditional family values and believe it or not - a Republican.

But then again, Congressman J.C. Watts Jr. has always been one to do what he feels is right and not just what others expect.

While earning his bachelor's degree in journalism at the University of Oklahoma, Watts led the Sooners to consecutive Big Eight football championships and Orange Bowl victories.

After a brief professional career in the Canadian Football League, Watts returned to Norman, OK, where he earned a seat in the House of Representatives three years ago.

Historically, Republicans have typically been older, extremely conservative law makers in congress.

However, as the representative of Oklahoma's 4th Congressional District, Watts is leading a new legion of Republicans in Washington, D.C.

"It's time we allowed new ideas to compete with old ideas," Watts said.

Since former Senator Bob Dole lost his presidential bid in November 1996 to Bill Clinton, who won re-election with a landslide victory, the Republican Party has begun to re-evaluate its agenda.

Though Texas Gov. George Bush, son of former President George Bush, may get a shot at overtaking the Democrats first, the diligent work ethic employed by Watts may in fact, earn him his own parade down Pennsylvania Avenue and a stay at the White House.

While Watts caught the eye of his colleagues shortly after his arrival, he captured the imagination of America on election night in

November 1996.

Shortly after Dole succeeded the presidency to Clinton, Watts spoke to the American people on behalf of the Republican Party.

What emerged in the ensuing days was not stories of Clinton, but those of Watts.

Americans wanted to know, who is J.C. Watts Jr.? And why had the Republicans kept him in the shadows of a falling party?

Concerned that the majority of America believed Republican Party leaders lacked enough charisma to connect with voters, Watts stepped up into the spotlight as the Republicans wasted no time in re-inventing their aging identity.

Almost immediately rumors and speculation began circulating throughout Washington's elite that Watts would cherish the opportunity retired Col. Colin Powell turned down; a chance to be the first African-American to run for president with the backing of a major political party.

Even with the possibility of receiving his mail at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.,

With his old football mentality still intact, Watts sees this current election strategy as the most important, much like a football team focusing on a weaker opponent even though it is set to face the best the following week.

But when Watts isn't out lending support to his fellow constituents, who are up for re-election, he's garnering support for his school voucher program.

"I am a supporter of school vouchers, or parental choice as I prefer to call it," Watts said, "simply because it works. I have traveled this country and seen school choice programs making a difference."

"I have talked to parents who had the opportunity to move their kids out of schools that were failing them and seen their excitement as they shared the drastic improvements in their child's school performance."

Born and raised in Eufaula, OK, Watts graduated from Eufaula High School in 1976. At that point, he had already surpassed the education his father and mother received.

Despite the fact that Watts' father only attended school through the second day of the seventh grade and his mother received only a tenth grade education, his parents encouraged their children to continue their education past high school.

"I have always had great pride in my mother and father," Watts said, "because they made the best of what they had for themselves and our family."

"I call the advice my dad had given me throughout my life 'Buddyisms,' and they

have served as words of wisdom. He didn't need a college diploma to teach him the importance of faith, responsibility and hard work. I am very proud to have had a mother and father who instilled these basic values in me and helped me understand the virtue of common sense."

written by  
**Keith Ryan Cartwright**

Eufaula with integrated schools.

"Today we are forcing children in several impoverished communities to go to schools with metal detectors and drug dealers," Watts said. "This is not a learning environment."

"We must give every American child the opportunity to benefit from a world class education," he said.

In making a point that emphasizes an idea he supports, Watts has developed a unique speaking style in which he often tells his

own personal stories of triumph and tragedy.

His public speaking style is just one of the ways in which Watts has been able to bring not only the residents of his district but Americans as a whole closer to the US government than they have been in the past.

"Our government should not be a distant bureaucracy full of red tape that alienates the people it is supposed to represent," Watts said. "I share my personal experiences with my audiences because it is a way for them to get to know J.C. Watts, and it also helps my audience relate

to the way Congress works. "I try to talk with folks like we're sitting down and having a conversation over dinner, instead of using crazy, obscure Washington language like 'CBO' and 'OMB' that no one outside the Beltway understands."

One idea the residents of Watts' district understand is that he really does come

**Story concludes, Page 6.**

## BIOGRAPHY



J.C. Watts Jr.

Elected to House of Representatives in Nov. 1994  
Represents the 4th Congressional District of OK

Graduated: University of Oklahoma  
Major: Earned B.A. in Journalism

Born: Eufaula, OK Resides: Norman, OK  
He and his wife, Frankie, have five children

At 40 years old, Congressman Watts is one of the youngest Republicans currently in office. He serves on the Transportation Committee and also on the National Security Committee. While a student at Oklahoma, Watts led the Sooners football team to two straight Orange Bowl victories. He then briefly played professionally in the CFL. Away from politics Watts serves as Associate Pastor of Sunnyside Southern Baptist Church in Del City, OK.

However, Watts is quick to point out that often times such is not the case for children in that same situation, especially in the inner cities.

The school voucher program he is cosponsoring with Rep. Jim Talent, R-MO, and Rep. Floyd Flake, D-NY, is an attempt to give those kids in the inner cities the same chance any other kid would get elsewhere.

"If we do not improve our educational system," Watts said, "we will be cheating our kids and grandkids of the opportunity to compete in this global-market. Our kids are not just competing with the kids in a neighboring state. They are also competing with kids in Japan and Russia."

Back when Watts was about to enter high school, his father wanted him to get the best education possible. Watts, therefore, enrolled in a predominately white school rather than the one located in his neighborhood.

It was the first experience for the city of

## 1992 Gallup Poll

In response to school vouchers

### National Results:

73% of low-income respondents favored vouchers  
vs.  
63% of high-income respondents

### Detroit Results:

87% of the minorities (mostly African-American)  
vs.  
approximately 68% Caucasian

Watts chooses not to become too self-indulgent with his own intentions but instead focuses his attention toward maintaining a Republican majority in Congress in the upcoming 1998 elections.

and father," Watts said, "because they made the best of what they had for themselves and our family."

"I call the advice my dad had given me throughout my life 'Buddyisms,' and they

**African-American History Month  
Art and Activities scheduled for MTSU  
February 2 through 25**

Last year, Middle Tennessee State University, through the efforts of the African-American History Month Committee, became the first-ever university to create a partnership with the U.S. Postal Service. The result was a spectacular month-long, multi-sited exhibit of the Black Heritage Stamp Series as well as enlarged reproductions of other notable U.S. stamps of historic, artistic, and educational acclaim.

This year's African-American History Month celebration at MTSU, the theme of which is "Paths to Empowerment," continues this successful partnership, with the university hosting a special regional viewing of the "African-American Musicians in United States Postal Service Art" exhibit.

The exhibit will feature original artwork from the Jazz Musicians, Popular Singers, and Big Band Leaders series, as well as the art work of two as yet unissued stamp series--Gospel Singers and Folk Musicians. Included in the Gospel Singers Series are Mahalia Jackson, Roberta Martin, Clara Ward, and Sister Rosetta. The Folk Musicians Series is comprised of Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, Sonny Terry, and Josh White.

Civic clubs, professional organizations, school classes, church groups, and others are welcome to visit MTSU and to tour the stamp exhibit. Special Saturday and Sunday group tour reservations may be made by calling the MTSU Ticket Office at 898-2103. Group reservations of 12 or more should be made by calling Cindy Randles at the same number or toll free at 1-888-937-6878.

**Mon., Feb. 2**

- "African-American Musicians in United States Postal Service Art" opens and will run through Feb. 20.

**Thur., Feb. 5**

- A special kickoff reception will be held from 3:00--5:00 p.m. in the MTSU Alumni Center. The reception is free and open to the public.

**Wed., Feb. 11**

- Jennings A. Jones Chair in Free Enterprise Luncheon, JUB Tennessee Room (time and speaker TBA)

- National Civil Rights Museum tour, Memphis. Open to MTSU students, faculty, and staff. \$5.00 adults; \$4.00 students with I.D. Call Barbara Patton (895-2185) or Robert Rucker (898-2510)

**Thur., Feb. 12**

- Author Marita Golden, "Writers Forum," 3--5 p.m. and 6--8 p.m., Alumni Center

**Mon., Feb. 16**

- Courtland Milloy, *Washington Post* staff writer and columnist, commentator for Black Entertainment Television Network News, and host of the weekly "For Black Men Only"; class lectures TBA. Open lecture 6 p.m., State Farm Hall, sponsored by Seigenthaler Chair in First Amendment Studies and The First Amendment Center/Freedom Forum at Vanderbilt University

**Tue., Feb. 17**

- African-American History Month Faculty Development Institute, Dr. Gerald W. Patton, facilitator. Patton is executive associate director of Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The issue to be discussed is "Improving Retention Rates for African-American Students." Also included will be an interdisciplinary panel on addressing accreditation diversity standards through AAHM activities. Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building, Room 121, noon to 2:30 p.m.

**Wed., Feb. 18**

- Dr. Tommie Morton Young, author and lecturer, will discuss researching family ancestry in a free and open forum, 6:30--8:00 p.m., Alumni Center

**Thur., Feb. 19**

- The John Pleas Faculty Recognition Award, 3--5 p.m., Alumni Center

**Tue., Feb. 24**

- Darren Johnson, trainer and facilitator, and president of Johnson Consulting Services, will convene a student leadership workshop titled "Letting Go of Stuff," JUB, Hazlewood Dining Room, 6--8 p.m. To reserve space, call Sherrie Murray at 898-2987.

**Wed., Feb. 25**

- Jawanza Kunjufu, Ph.D., "African-American Images," Tucker Theatre, 1 p.m.



# Kirk Whalum Jeff Golub Philippe Saisse

in concert

Monday, Feb. 2, 8 p.m.

Tucker Theatre

presented by MTSU Special Events and  
The African American History Month  
Committee



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Fr: 1/23 *Fergusons Blue*  
Sa: 1/24 *John Blaze*  
Su: 1/25 *Roland Gresham Jazz*  
Tu: 1/27 *Mum's Showcase*  
We: 1/28 *Signal*  
Th: 1/29 *Glossary*  
Fr: 1/30 *The Katies*  
Sa: 1/31 *Janie Grey*  
Su: 2:1 *Roland Gresham Jazz*

### Brew Specials

Mo: Buy 1 Get 1 Free  
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Tu: Beat The Clock-50c Draft  
@ 7 pm; \$1 @ 8; \$1.50 @ 9

We: Over The Hump  
\$1 Draft; 5pm-9pm

Th: \$3 Bottomless Cup  
8 pm-9 pm

Fr, Sa & Su-Th:  
Happy Hours

Ev: Choose from 150+ Brews  
& 25+ Wines

### Upcoming Events

Tu: 1/27 *M.U.M.'s*  
*Show Cases Local Talent*

Tu: 2/24 *Fat Tuesday*  
*w/ Fools Rush In*

Su: 1/25 *Super Bowl Party*  
*Keg Partys*  
*From Kickoff 'til fat lady*  
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# Required reading needs some help

continued from, Page 3.

students want. Complaining the required reading lists are too rigid, and "boring," they told *Post Modern* letting them choose a book would encourage them to read more.

"Should they make us read stuff like *Robinson Crusoe*?" complains Helene Childress, a high-school senior in Williamson County. "If they say 'You have to read this' you won't want to.

"They should let us pick out what we want to read."

But even if they don't "want" to read their required books, high-school students are still buying them. Ranging from \$4 to \$14 a book, six to eight books a year, parents will spend a hefty sum of money to put their children through high-school English. Sometimes adding to that cost is the \$5 yellow-and-black Cliffs Notes, a favorite supplement (and sometimes replacement) for students.

(Putting it into financial perspective, though, a parent told *Post Modern* she gives her son "\$6 a week to go to the movies," so she enjoys buying the books.)

At Bookworld in Cool Springs Galleria, a store that

caters to required reading by offering a 20 percent discount for students, manager Nicole Robinson-Hamilton says most of her high-school clientele (roughly 55 percent of them) buy the books and the Cliffs Notes, needing the latter to help them understand the former. They avoid the audio books, "deterred by the price," and rarely cheat by buying

## What are they reading?

### *Lysistrata*

by Aristophanes

Women of warring Sparta and Athens band together to stop having sex with their husbands until the Peloponnesian War ends. Circa 41 BC.

### *Slaughterhouse 5*

by Kurt Vonnegut

Tralfamadores, beings who control the earth from their alien planet, put on display Billy Pilgrim, a survivor of the Dresden fire-bombing in WWII. Published in 1969.

### *Beloved*

by Toni Morrison

The first volume in a planned trilogy about the life of a runaway slave women. Published in 1987.

### *The Trial*

by Franz Kafka

Protagonist Joseph K. is arrested one morning and doesn't really know why. At the end of the novel, still unclear of what's going on, he resigns to his execution. Published in 1925.

### *The Once and Future King*

by T.H. White

A quartet of novels in a single volume about the life of King Arthur. Published together in 1958.

Stone for students who can't make out the iambic pentameter. Inside one of the books, on the first page is the original text of *Julius Caesar*, on the next is a modernized version. So, "Et tu Brute," becomes, "You too, Brutus."

Outside from their required reading, though, 90s-rebellious teens aren't buying a lot of classical literature. Pop magazines top the list, like *Rolling Stone* or *YM*, followed by Sci-Fi tales, horror (Stephen King and Anne Rice leading the blood-thirsty pack), and occult. (Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* has been on some required reading lists.)

### *To the Lighthouse*

by Virginia Woolf

A stream-of-consciousness style book recounting various times the Ramsay family visit the Isle of Skye in Scotland. Published in 1927.

### *Anna Karenina*

by Leo Tolstoy

A novel of the adulterous affair between Anna Karenin, wife of Aleksey, and self-centered Count Vronsky. Published in installments between 1875-1877.

### *Night*

by Elie Wiesel

A semiautobiographical account of a young boy's reaction to Auschwitz and the Holocaust. Published in 1958.

### *Henry IV (parts I and II)*

by William Shakespeare

Set in the 15th century, it is the coming of age of Prince Hal, son of Henry IV, from outcast to ruler. First performed in 1597.

Sources: Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature; Benet's Encyclopedia of American Literature.

that 28 percent of freshmen spent NO hours per week reading for pleasure," he says. "For whatever reason - and there are many, ranging from anti-intellectualism, or the idea that Beavis and Butt-head are 'cool,' to the fact that students lead busier, more demanding lifestyles - students just aren't reading much of anything - and I'm not just referring to freshmen.

"Anyone who is considered well-read arrives at that distinction not merely by fulfilling the requirements of literature courses, but also by being an active, life-long reader."

Whatever "healthy mixture" is needed to get students coming into college to be "active, life-long" readers hasn't been discovered yet.

High-school teachers are struggling to keep their students' attention, having them read more and more contemporary authors, forgetting the priceless gems of Aristophanes, Homer, and Chaucer. Private-/magnet-school teachers are buckling up at bit too tight, forgetting that some authors today, like Cormac McCarthy or Toni Morrison, can be just as valuable to

students as reading Faulkner or Melville. Neither extreme is good.

"We not only have to prepare students for college," education specialist Hayes says, "we have to prepare them for life."

only the Cliffs Notes.

"I don't know if that's because the movies are more available or not," she jokes.

Walking about the store, she points out Barren's versions of Shakespeare's plays as a seeming Rosetta

Robert Bray, chair of the lower-division English here, cites a survey in the January issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as a reason for educators to be "concerned."

"The Chronicle found

# Watts persuades NAACP his way

continued from, Page 4.

through on his campaign promises.

Watts not only has worked diligently with school vouchers and the H.R. 1031, The American Community Renewal Act, but he has also kept his promise of returning home to Norman, OK, every weekend no matter what it takes.

During the three-years

Watts has served as a congressman, only twice he has failed to return home to Norman for the weekend.

"I still go home to Norman, OK, every weekend," Watts said. "I go grocery shopping and attend the little league basketball and soccer games, so I know as a father and a community member what is on the mind of the American people."

For Watts that idea is

a two-way street in which he not only wants to know what is on the minds of the American people, but he also communicates his thoughts and ideas as well. No matter what the subject matter may be.

In fact, in an editorial appearing in the "Wall Street Journal" on April 23, Watts wrote of his disappointment in the NAACP's opposition to school vouchers.

"I would hope my editorial in favor of school choice would open the mind of anyone reading it," Watts said. "especially members of the NAACP. The only thing I ask is that people open their eyes to the problems of our educational system and

consider all solutions. I hope the NAACP will help lead the change for parental choice because it benefits many Americans who are minorities.

"I am very mindful and thankful of the NAACP's past accomplishments on behalf of black Americans. I do, however, urge the NAACP to add one more great achievement to their record by supporting and helping to implement school choice."

As Watts continues to speak out publicly, he no doubt is gaining support not only for his school vouchers but for his own political savvy as well.

With each passing day, Watts steps closer to when he might address the American people as the president.

# New Hampshire still fails to recognize King

**To many people, New Hampshire may seem more like a state full of irony than a state in the union.**

On the heels of Martin Luther King Day, New Hampshire still remains the lone state that does not yet recognize the man who did so much for not only civil rights but equal rights in general.

"We're the one state that has a license plate that says, Live Free or Die," Lionel Washington Johnson said. "And, here's a man who died for freedom, yet we don't even recognize him."

For Johnson, 73, New Hampshire's insistent dissing of King is a personal attack. Until recently Johnson, a democrat, was the only minority to hold a seat in New Hampshire's House of Representatives.

However, New Hampshire's house is one of the largest in the United States with 401 members, just two of which are now African-American.

"You can take that for what it's worth," Johnson said. "On a whole, I get along very well here. But, when I first came here it wasn't easy."

Johnson arrived in New Hampshire just after the start of WWII, when the army sent up a group of 500 black soldiers from the south to be educated in just one summer, before going being shipped overseas.

More than 50 years later, Johnson still calls Manchester, NH, home.

Shortly after Johnson was elected he put together a bill that recognized civil rights day and pushed it through the house. His intention was the he would amend the bill in a couple years so that it would include King's name.

Unfortunately, his plan only half worked. Three times Johnson has put the amendment up for vote and three times it's failed to pass.

"We've had a lot of people who never voted against it," Johnson said, "but, they never supported it either."

**We still have a lot of horse and buggy ways of thinking up here.**

Lionel Washington Johnson

The first two times, the bill was defeated by a large number of votes. In the spring of 1997, the bill failed to pass by just one vote (178-177) with 46 no shows.

Coming so close makes the defeat even more heart breaking for Johnson, who over the years, has organized student marches, speakers and parades.

"We could have won by four or five votes, looking at the commitment we had," Johnson said.

Since the vote took place, several legislators who voted against the bill have changed their minds. Many of them changed their way of thinking after Ku Klux Klan members held a rally on the steps of the state capitol,

thanking the New Hampshire for not recognizing King.

"That's all after the fact," Johnson said. "That's too late. There's no excuse."

A couple years back, Arizona quickly passed a bill recognizing King along with civil rights, only after the NFL threatened to prevent Phoenix from hosting a Super Bowl.

"It's taken awhile for people as whole in other parts of the country to realize that we don't have a holiday," Johnson said. "There are a lot of white people who go places and come back and tell me they feel awful embarrassed."

"It's discouraging for some, to say where they're from."

While the federal government recognizes the day as a holiday, each state is allowed to mandate on their own how they intend to handle the day.

Though 49 of the states recognize King, some call it Civil Rights/Martin Luther King Day or vice versa while a few refer to it as Martin Luther King Day.

However, New Hampshire simply named it Civil Rights Day, failing to acknowledge King, and it is not a legal paid holiday.

"They feel that the other 49 states should follow New Hampshire," Johnson explained. "Not New Hampshire follow the other 49 states."

Over the years, Johnson has heard every reason imaginable as to why

New Hampshire shouldn't recognize King.

"If you disagree with something you have to find some kind of excuse," Johnson said.

Excuses have been plentiful as people have said, King never did anything more than anyone else, so why single out him? Instead of keeping kids out of school for the day, they should teach children about him.

Some have turned it into an issue of economics, saying the state couldn't bear to afford another paid holiday. And, believe it or not, one man

written by  
**Keith Ryan Cartwright**

However, a minister, Dr. Shetlwrigh, from Portsmouth is close to gaining enough support for an alternative license plate that would have Martin Luther King's name on it in place of Live Free or Die.

Shetlwrigh, who is the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was one of King's right-hand men.

In order for the state to administer the new plate, 300 signatures from state legislators are needed. Currently over 200 have already been collected.

"I know of some people who have been ticketed for covering up Live Free or Die," Johnson said. "This will be a legal way of doing that, but it will cost you \$40 for the plate."

Even though the state may not recognize King as a legal holiday, some residents still celebrate in their way.

Johnson helped to coordinate a day's worth events in Manchester, which includes a speech from Shetlwrigh, students from six area universities will march to the state capitol building to ring the bell at noon and the yearly presentation of the Martin Luther King Award.

This year's winner is June Rojas, an activist and teacher Manchester's Central High School. Rojas is originally from North Carolina.

"I think New Hampshire is starting to come around," Johnson said. "They're a little bit more aware."

"This isn't to just say, 'we got King's name [as a holiday]. This to say that he deserved it."

## Let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire...

Dr. Martin Luther King

Speech at the Capitol Mall in Washington D.C.  
Aug. 28, 1963

even blamed it on King's reluctance to support the Vietnam War.

"There are people here who think he played footsie with the communist," Johnson said. "It's a Yankee way of thinking."

"We still have a lot of horse and buggy ways of thinking up here."

Unfortunately for Johnson, he will be unable to bring the bill before the state legislature again. To prevent state legislature's from being tied up with re-occurring bills, they may only be brought up once-a-year for three-years.

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