



Long-Serving School Board Members Tanya Bess and Bill Zechman Conclude Their Terms

McMinnville, Tenn., September 20, 2024 – The Warren County Board of Education bids farewell to two of its longest-serving members, Tanya Bess and Bill Zechman, who concluded their terms effective September 1st. Bess, who served for 12 years, and Zechman, who served for 16 years, played significant roles in guiding the school system through times of growth, change, and challenge.

“I believe anyone who has the courage to run for public office should be celebrated, so it is easy for me to offer my sincere gratitude to two dedicated public servants. Bill Zechman and Tanya Bess exemplify outstanding leadership and courage to serve their community through service on the school board. They have both been unwavering in advocating for what is right for our students and staff in Warren County. I value their friendship greatly and am so thankful for their service to our school system,” said Dr. Grant Swallows, director of schools.

Both Bess and Zechman have been advocates for student achievement, community engagement, and fiscal responsibility throughout their tenure on the board. Their leadership has helped shape the policies and practices that have positioned Warren County Schools as a leader in education.

“It has been my great honor to serve for 16 years with board members who set high but attainable goals,” said Bill Zechman. “It’s not too much to say that a community expresses its values and aspirations by the school board it elects and by its willingness to support the educational program.”

“I’m so very proud to have been a part of the school system that I attended, my husband attended, and my children attended,” said Tanya Bess. “I’ve had the privilege of contributing to the decision-making process for 12 years to move our school system forward.”

Throughout their tenure, the pair of school board commissioners guided Warren County Schools through periods of unparalleled responsibility, including the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 and the selection of a new superintendent later that same year. Their leadership contributed to multiple recognitions, including several Tennessee School Board Association Board of Distinction Awards and the prestigious School Board of the Year honor in 2021. Most recently, under their direction, the board garnered national attention by becoming the first school system in Tennessee to implement a district-wide ban on personal electronic devices during school hours.

“Serving on a school board comes as close to a sacred trust as any elective office in America. When voters choose their board members they are entrusting their children and grandchildren to a system shaped and defined by the decisions of that policy-making body,” said Zechman.

“Will that school system set high expectations for all students and provide the resources and opportunities for children to succeed at higher levels? Or will it be content with mediocrity, with getting by with the minimum? Students will respond to expectations whether high or low or indifferent,” he added.

Reflecting on her service alongside Zechman and sharing a favorite memory from earlier years, Bess said, “Bill and I always have a good laugh at this because we’re the only two still on the board from the time the decision was made; we had been approached by MTSU on a program to teach kindergarteners Mandarin Chinese. Of course, we try to think with forethought [of] how this could be a wonderful experience introducing children to another language at such a young age. Well, this program did not develop, and Mandarin Chinese was just a memory. I say all of this to say that members of the board don’t always get it right but with each decision over 12 years and members that I sat with, I can say truthfully that I do believe the decisions were made with the best of intentions for educators and staff to move Warren County forward.”

As the Warren County Board of Education moves forward, it recognizes the years of dedicated service provided by Tanya Bess and Bill Zechman. Their contributions have supported the board’s ongoing efforts to provide a quality educational experience for all students in Warren County.

About Warren County Schools:

Warren County Schools is dedicated to providing a supportive and challenging educational environment that fosters academic excellence and prepares students for future success. Through a commitment to innovation, community engagement, and the professional growth of our educators, Warren County Schools strives to be a leader in education both locally and statewide.

For more information, please contact:

Sarah Cantrell

Communications Coordinator

cantrells2@warrenschoools.com