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From: Robin Smith <[REDACTED]>
Date: 6/2/2008 7:06:10 AM
To: phil.bredesen@state.tn.us, lydia.lenker@state.tn.us
cc: lisa.lancaster@state.tn.us [REDACTED]
Subject: Tennessee Human Rights Commission

June 2, 2008

Governor Phil Bredesen,

I write to you to express the privilege I have had to serve as a Human Rights Commissioner since 2002. It has been a position that I have never politicized because of the tenets of my Christian faith and personal beliefs about race: In choosing to believe in the Creation account and the Great Flood in the Bible, there is one human race...we're all related.

Serving with former Chairman Benjamin Hooks and current Chairman Spencer Wiggins has enriched my life with their friendship and leadership- sincerely an honor.

I am grossly disappointed that in recent days individuals who affiliate themselves with the Tennessee Democrat Party have chosen to attack my role as a Human Rights Commissioner rather than deal directly with the issues in question – the qualifications of and statements made by Senator Barack Obama and his campaign. Rather than stand in the arena of politics and address specific policy differences and claims made by the candidate and his activist wife, the shrill cry of “racism” has been leveled toward me.

I would've chosen to let these hollow accusations fall without answer had it not been for my children coming to me with concern and for understanding. You see, my son's best friend for the last many years is African American who vacations with us and enjoys our home as his. My children have been taught by my husband and me the same teaching I've referenced already and have taught for 21 years in Bible studies at my church: there is one human race.

Further, my children have heard of childhood accounts of my being called an “n...-lover” for playing with African American pals on the playground. I have unfortunately shared on several occasions being “booed” and “hissed” at while speaking, along with former Tennessee Democrat Party Chairman Bob Tuke and other Democrats, to the state dinner of the NAACP in an effort to extend a friendly hand.

My children, along with others, have witnessed my efforts for years through politics to work with individuals of all races and through our church to serve in ministry to the inner city and those who struggle with needs.

I begrudge no one for making a political appointment. Governor, you have earned that right and will find no comment from me to the contrary. I, however, will be vocal and very determined to protect my character and integrity that is based on my faith. The faith that defines my political leanings due to the protection of the life of the unborn, the view of family as that of the Scripture, the view that the wage I earn is mine, not the government's to spend on my family, my church and for those charities and causes of my choosing, etc.

I sincerely wish you the best in choosing a person to serve for the next six years on the Tennessee Human Rights Commission that will hold as their motivation that which is right rather than that which is politically expedient.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robin Smith

cc: Chairman Spencer Wiggins

Executive Director Beverly Watts

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