

From: The Oconee Enterprise

Long runs for BOE

By [Michael Prochaska](#) | March 20, 2024 | [0](#)



Oconee County Board of Education Post 4 candidate Sheri Ward Long will be running unopposed in the May 21 Democratic Primary. She will then face whoever wins the Republican Primary, which is a three-way race among Andy Pippen, Russell Toms and Adam Hammond.

Long earned a degree in home economics from Georgia Southern University. Throughout her career, she has served as a paraprofessional in Oconee County Schools and various positions in the retail sector.

“In college, I learned that I had a reading disability, which explained my difficulties in grade school,” she said in a prepared statement. “As such, when I married and had children, I was determined that they would attend the Oconee schools, where I thought they would thrive.”

Her three children graduated from Oconee County High School.

On multiple days, The Enterprise asked Long several follow-up questions, including why she chose to run as a Democrat. Long has not responded as of press time.

In her written statement, Long said her concerns primarily focus on the welfare of the students.

Per bus routes, for example, some children have over an hour each way on school buses, she stated.

“This is inexcusable,” Long stated. “We need to figure out how to recruit reliable, safe drivers. Perhaps we need to consider reallocating resources from building projects, technology, etc. to achieve this.”

On the subject of curriculum, Long said some students underachieve or even drop out of high school because they don’t feel like the school, or its curriculum offers anything to help with their future.

“I am hearing many concerns from parents and teachers about curriculum issues,” she said, “including content of teaching materials, lack of physical textbooks, overreliance on technology and lack of engagement of students due to these factors.”

Long believes that the BOE and superintendent should discuss the resources and procedures for students who encounter severe hardships, such as homelessness, food insecurity, death and illness of a parent or sibling.

“I know firsthand that outreach to students in these difficult times is lacking,” she said. “I also think the superintendent and school board need to discuss or report on trends in critical health issues of students.”

Examples include chronic illnesses, neurological issues, physical disabilities and even cancer.

“We also need to know about trends and resources required by students who are not English speaking,” Long added.

Other questions that should be asked, she said, are as follows:

- Do we need meaningful after school programs for “latchkey” children, even teenagers?
- Do we need to bring back programs that provide real-world skills, such as car repair, wood shop and home economics?
- Are we overemphasizing Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment programs over trades?
- Are lactating teachers adequately accommodated if they are trying to pump breast milk?
- Are Chromebooks and other technology helping the educational process, or are they more detrimental?

“Teachers need to be encouraged to attend board meetings if they have an issue that needs to be presented, without fear of repercussions,” said Long. “They have a valuable voice and knowledge of relevant issues.”

Per the annual budget, Long said she is committed to holding the line on all school budgets.

“I suspect more can be done with less,” she said. “Tax increases cause home ownership to be less affordable for families we are known for serving in our schools.”

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