

## Clemmons Statement on Adult Literacy Program Cuts

In January, the citizens of Nashville went to the polls and rejected the notorious English Only amendment to the Metro Charter. It was a huge step forward for this community. But now, through bureaucratic bungling and foggy decision-making, Nashville's only adult literacy program has effectively been eradicated.

I actively opposed the English Only Amendment, and I actively oppose this absurd budget cut which strikes a severe blow to the Nashville Adult Literacy Council.

I will take whatever actions are necessary to restore this program to full funding. The Volunteer Literacy Program appears to be a victim of the decision to eliminate Community Education.

I understand that half the adults served by this program are native-born Americans who, because they dropped out of school or encountered other challenges in life, need remedial help with literacy. The other half of the people served by the program are immigrants who are making the effort to learn English as a second language.

Judging by the last election, it is safe to say that more than half of Nashville's electorate does not want to discriminate against Nashvillians who do not speak English as their native language, and less than half of the electorate apparently wants everyone to speak English.

Therefore, it logically follows that EVERYONE supports adult literacy in English.

This is a bad decision that must be reversed. It is not clear who decided to cut the pitiable amount of money from Metro's coffers, approximately \$44,000, necessary to keep the program alive. Whoever made this decision failed to recognize the huge returns for our community from such a small investment.

I can tell you this. As the next Metro Councilman from the 18th District, I will lead the effort to restore this contribution to adult literacy in Nashville, and I will fight to restore this program.

We cannot take one giant step forward as a community by defeating the English Only amendment only to take a huge step back by retreating from our commitment to adult literacy for native-born Americans as well as immigrants who call Nashville home.

We all recognize that these are tough times for our city and its budget, but tough times demand leadership and courage. It is time for us, once again, to boldly stand up for those who need our help the most.

-John Ray Clemmons