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Newcomer ousts Miller for BOE

By Antoinette Konz
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Tommie Miller lost his District 3 seat on the Montgomery County Board of Education on Tuesday night to a newcomer who he claims used last-minute dirty campaign tactics to defeat him.

With nearly all precincts counted, Eleanor Dawkins bested Miller 59 percent to 41 percent. There is no Republican opposition, so Dawkins will take her seat on the board Jan. 1.

Miller had charged Dawkins with playing the race card in a news conference Monday. Dawkins' cam-

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

District 3 (Democrat)

24 of 25 precincts reporting	
Tommie Miller	1,088
Eleanor Dawkins	1,598
What's next: Winner has no opposition in November	

paign had distributed two brochures over the weekend, one referring to Miller as "Uncle Tommie."

"I am very saddened for the city as a whole because once again, this city has been the victim of race-bait-

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BOE: Dawkins excited about new position

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ing," Miller said. "For the last 50 years, racist white politicians race-baited white people against black people, now you have racist black politicians race-baiting black people against white people. You could have run Donald Duck against me and race-baited and the outcome would have been the same."

Dawkins denied she used dirty politics to win.

"During my campaign, I always talked about the things I wanted to do. I never mentioned my opponent," she said. "I am sorry he felt that dirty tricks were used against him. I am not aware of anything of that na-

ture."

Dawkins said she is excited and happy to take on her new role.

"I want to create some harmony with the school board and the superintendent so that we can help her complete some of the goals she has set for our children," she said. "I want to focus on the positives."

The two other open seats on the school board feature newcomers who have no opposition.

In District 2, Charlotte Meadows is running for the seat that currently belongs to Mark La Branche.

In District 5, Melissa Snowden is running for the seat that currently belongs to chairman Dave Borden.

Both Borden and La Branche announced earlier this year they would not seek re-election.



Dawkins

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Miller's loss hits BOE members hard

By Antoinette Konz
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Four members of Montgomery's school board expressed concern Wednesday that their vice chairman's Democratic primary loss will leave them leaderless when he leaves at year's end.

One board member, however, supported the voters' decision.

Tommie Miller lost his District 3 seat Tuesday to Eleanor Dawkins, a funeral home director. She will take over the seat Jan. 1.

Miller accused Joe Reed, a top Alabama Education Association official, and state Rep. John Knight, D-Montgomery, of running the Dawkins campaign.

Dawkins' campaign distributed two brochures over the weekend, one referring to Miller as "Uncle Tommie," the other stating that Miller refused to hire black construction firms for school projects. The Montgomery County Democratic Committee, headed by

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► Precinct-by-precinct results in Montgomery County 8-9A

Knight, paid for the "Uncle Tommie" brochure.

"I am very concerned because Tommie is and has been such a great leader for us," board member Vickie Jernigan said. "I am concerned that she (Dawkins) will only be a puppet for Joe Reed and John Knight and that they are going to try and run the school district."

Dawkins denied Wednesday she will be a puppet for anyone.

"I am my own person," she said. "Mr. Reed and Mr. Knight supported me because of my father, Rufus A. Lewis. It was (because of) my father and the help he gave them in the beginning of their political careers that they were willing to help me."

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BOE: Members worried

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Board member Beverly Ross showed little emotion at Miller's loss. In April, Ross had planned on asking both Miller and board Chairman Dave Borden to resign after accusing them of not acting in the best interest of the district. She later withdrew her request.

"I don't really have anything to say," Ross said Wednesday. "The people have spoken. He'll be missed."

Board members Mary Briers and Mark La Branche, as well as Borden, said they are worried about the district's future.

Miller "lost this race because he tried to bring both blacks and whites together for the common good of Montgomery," Borden said. "God help Montgomery if we continue to repeat our tortured racial history. For us to move forward, we must judge our elected leaders on their ability to unite, not divide our community."

Briers described Miller as a "great leader."

"I hate to think that after Jan. 1 he will no longer be on the board," she said.

Board member Henry Spears could not be reached for comment.