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1984
Running For
Office

Photo Album

Reconstruction

in

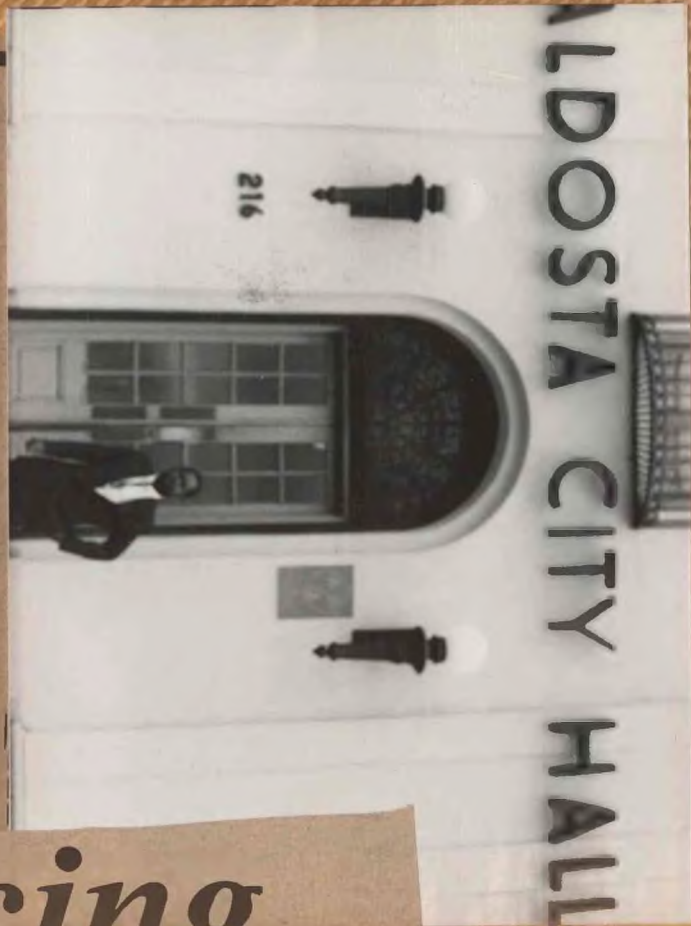
Georgia

The

1980's



Houseal poses in one of Lowndes County's Cotton fields. He relates the idea
— hands that once picked
cotton can now pick local officials in Valdosta. |



Introducing **Willie Houseal** *City Council District 1*



nder/Director
WILLIE HOUSEAL

Home: (912) 244-4608

Winnersville Coalition Consultants
(We Solve Problems)

ECONOMICAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, EDUCATIONAL

Settlement Not Popular, But Tolerable

Valdosta City School Board Members To Be Elected By Wards

By SYLVIA COOPER
Times Staff Writer

For one reason or another, nobody seems overjoyed with the settlement of the Justice Department's year-old suit against the Valdosta Board of Education, but all say they will go along with it — for the time being.

"To me it's like bureaucratic patchwork," said City Council candidate Willie Houseal. "We're not satisfied, but we are going to go along because we have an immediate need for representation."

"They'll be hearing from us," warned Valdosta NAACP president Lewis Gordon.

"What we've got now are just some tokens — not real equality as far as the school board. I think we could have had four out of nine representatives from the black community.

"At present we plan to see how it works with three black representatives. If there is no relief, we will go back to court and get the relief that is necessary," Gordon said.

Valdosta Board of Education members feel the settlement, which is sure to cost at least five of them their seats in 1986, is a fair one, the "best that could be had under the circumstances."

However, several of them have serious concerns about the "ward" or district system and board members having to run before their terms have expired if they want to retain their seats on the board.

"I think that's asking an awful lot of very busy citizens in this town to have to run twice when they have just run, but that, of course, is part of the settlement," said Dr. William Grow, chairman of the board of education.

"I was perfectly happy with the old system, but I am satisfied with the equity of the settlement with the Justice Department," Grow said.

"I'm not happy, but under the circumstances it is the best we could do and is a plan we can live with," said

board member David Waller.

Board member Joella Blackburn said, "We will just have to do the best we can to make it work."

The plan approved by the Justice Department calls for a nine-member board elected to staggered terms from the city's six political districts, beginning with the regular election in 1986. One member will be elected from each of the six districts, two from combinations of those districts, and one member will be elected from the city at large.

A temporary plan, almost guaranteed to give black representation to the board during the interim, calls for an election to be held Feb. 11, 1985, during which three additional board members will be elected, one each from the city's Districts 1, 2, and 3, giving the board 12 members for one year. In the 1986 regular election all seats will be up for grabs.

Currently, four of the all-white board members reside in District 5, and five reside in District 6, a situation which led one veteran observer to say, "Any way you cut the cake, five of the present members will be off the board after the election of 1986 when 12 members have to run for nine positions."

Superintendent of Valdosta Schools Ralph Brandon summed up the sentiments of several board members concerning the need for black representation on the board when he said, "I think it's a very equitable solution to the problem and will give representation to a segment of our population that has not been adequately represented during the past several years."

Willie Houseal is not so sure Brandon and the board members are correct. Speaking of District 7, a combination of districts 1, 2 and 4, which has a total black population of 48 percent, Houseal said, "You cannot get 48 percent of anybody to vote, so you can say that we've probably lost that district because of polarization, if it still exists, which I think it does.

District 7 is one of the two new districts formed as part of the settlement. The other is District 8, a combination of Districts 3, 5, and 6, which has a 31 percent total black population.

"We wanted that extra seat. We wanted to combine 1, 2, and 3. That would give us a good 85 percent black population, but the way it is now we only get 45 percent.

"If they want to play games and numbers, there was zero representation for minorities in the past, but now they want to over-emphasize percentages of numbers. If numbers are so important now, why weren't they important in the past?" Houseal said.

Some board members expressed fears that the ward system will lead to "ward bosses" and board members who are interested in one district rather than in the system as a whole.

David Waller said, "I just think the ward system is a bad political system, and I think it will lead to favoritism. If you're elected from a ward, you won't have the interest of the other wards as much at heart as if you were elected from all the wards.

"I also know it's more important than ever that we have qualified people to run because we're probably going to be split on issues. Hopefully not, but because of the ward system there will be a lot of issues we won't agree on as a whole," Waller said.

Waller's sentiments about the ward system were echoed by Dr. Joe Crane, Sr., who is in his eleventh year as board member.

"I have a hesitancy about the ward system unless we get qualified candidates with people really interested in the schools and are willing to work for the best educational system.

"I'm afraid we'll get people working for the area from which they were elected, when everybody should be working for all the kids. I just hope and pray we can get qualified candidates. That's the only way

it's going to work," Crane said.

Black leaders say the qualified candidates are there, but heretofore have been discouraged because they felt they did not have a chance to be elected under the old at-large election method.

"In the past people became disillusioned because of polarization. They knew they couldn't get the white vote, so they wouldn't run," Houseal said.

Winnersville Coalition president Iras DuBard said, "I think the probability of three and a half out of nine chances of getting blacks elected on the board are better than the zero-to-nine chance that we had with the at-large system.

"I thank God Valdosta has always been able to solve its problems without violence. I pray that this trend continues."

In the 1986 election, members elected from Districts 1, 2, and 3 will be elected for four-year terms. Members elected from Districts 4, 5 and 6 will be elected for a term of two years. Members elected from Districts 7 and 8 and the person elected to the at-large position will be elected to a term of six years.

Thereafter, all board of education members elected at regular municipal elections will be elected for a term of six years.

The suit against the Valdosta school board was a portion of the Justice Department's 1983 suit charging at-large voting procedures in Lowndes County and the city of Valdosta were discriminatory to black voters. It sought to force the Lowndes County Commission, the Valdosta City Council and the Valdosta Board of Education to devise election plans which meet the requirements of federal law.

The school board was the only one of the original defendants not to have a plan approved. The County Commission's plan was approved by the Justice Department in May of this year. The City Council and the Justice Department reached an agreement in September.

Crime Watch Work

Neighborhood Crime Watch is in full swing throughout the community with the help of the Wymodausis Club and Ms. Joan Hartman. By now, you have probably seen or heard Houseal's Crime Watch announcement on Channel 44, or G-95 Radio Station. Crime Watch can be a successful project for the entire community with the use of media and friends who spread the word. Don't be a statistic, get involved and organize a Neighborhood Crime Watch in your community— you will be glad you did.

Qualifying Opens Here

From Staff, Wire Reports

Several candidates officially threw their hats in the ring early for Valdosta's Feb. 12 special election, as qualifying for Valdosta City Council and Valdosta School Board posts began at 9 a.m. today.

Candidates qualifying for three Valdosta City Council seats are as follows: District 1, Willie Houseal; District 2, Bunnis "B" Williams, Iras DuBard and Robert Dinkins; and District 3, Juanita Jackson Parker.

Candidates qualifying for Valdosta School Board who signed up early today are: District 2, Kelly D. Dausey and Minnie Martin; and District 3, Marie Gibbs.

The special election is mandated after the settlement of a civil rights lawsuit against the city by the U.S. Justice Department.

The settlement calls for a special election to be held Feb. 12 to elect representatives from three predominately black districts on the Valdosta City Council and Valdosta School Board.

The representatives who are elected will hold office for one year, at which time all city council and city school board positions will be up for grabs.

Voter Apathy A 2-Fold Problem

In response to the article written Aug. 28 which stated "Voter Registration Due in Lowdes," I became disturbed over the comments made by Mr. Harrison Tillman, member of Lowndes County Board of Elections.

The particular comment stated "It's ridiculous to increase registration sites and their open hours, because even if they do register to vote, they don't show up to cast their vote on election day," referring to the 40 percent voter turnout during this past election.

I disagree with Mr. Tillman for the very same reason I would disagree with the educator who feels he or she should only teach that 40 percent of the students who are interested in learning.

What if those 60 percent are left to learn on their own? I would hate to be one of those students. It is the negative attitude we try to avoid. We can now begin to see where much of the apathetic attitudes are emerging.

We must understand that the lack of registration and low voter turnout is a two-fold problem. Registration will increase only if the process is made readily available, even if it

Letters

Letters to the editor are welcome. To be considered for publication letters must be signed. Signatures will be used with all letters published.

Letters are subject to standard editing. There is no length requirement but shorter letters have a better chance of being published.

Letters should be addressed to: Letters To The Editor, The Valdosta Daily Times, P.O. Box 968, Valdosta, Ga., 31601.

means increasing voter registration and deputy registrars.

We must also be aware that voter registration and low voter turnouts are not only prevalent in the black community but in the white community as well, according to the latest voter education statistics.

Among the 57,000 white citizens, 22,000 are eligible voters, and of the approximately 15,000 black citizens in Lowndes County, nearly 5,000 of those are eligible votes, and even more alarming, in each group, less than half turn out to vote. We can clearly see the problem includes the entire county.

Winnersville Coalition considers the temporary

notice to increase the sites and deputy registrars a blessing in disguise, because our organization NAACP, the Georgia Womens Political Caucus, and others have made honest efforts toward combating voter apathy in this area. It's pure logic, where there's greater exposure there will also be greater interest.

On the other side of the coin, poor voter turnout can be attributed to the at-large method of voting. When citizens are able to identify with their representative, whether they live on the same street, or somewhere in their district, democracy then becomes more realistic.

Citizens can actually

begin to see their vote count. Implementation of wards and districts will practically stamp out voter apathy.

Winnersville Coalition will continue to combat voter apathy in Lowndes County, because we are not pleased with a 40 percent voter turnout, nor are we pleased with Georgia ranking 49th in the nation.

I suggest we as concerned citizens begin to take a closer look at public officials who feel "it's ridiculous" to motivate citizens to register and vote, "because voter apathy causes complacency and burnout."

It is hoped that Lowndes County Board of Elections makes haste to expedite matters without further anticipation from state level.

Finally, it must be clarified that citizens are not being "forced to register" nor to vote, but are awarded a greater opportunity than ever before to become first class citizens.

If you don't register you can't vote, no vote no choice, it's still your choice.

Willie Houseal
Winnersville
Coalition
Consultants

Valdosta Ward System Gets Go-Ahead

Sept 19, 1984

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Valdosta voters will be going to the polls in February to elect three additional members to the Valdosta City Council.

A settlement on the city's portion of an 11-month-old lawsuit challenging the city's at-large method of electing council members was signed by U.S. District Court Judge Wilber Owens at a hearing in Federal Court today.

The signing of the consent decree came after the plan was approved by the U.S. Justice Department late last week.

City officials were notified Tuesday that the U.S. Justice Department approved the plan that will expand the city council to seven members, six to be elected from wards in a 1986 election.

Three members will be elected from predominately black districts and three will be elected from predominately white districts. One council member and the mayor will be elected at large.

However, three council members will be elected from the predominately black districts in February, making it a nine-member council (not including the mayor) until the 1986 election.

Then, all city council posts will be up for grabs, with candidates running for staggered terms.

Justice Department attorney Mark Posner, who helped write the lawsuit, contended that even though the council posts would be increased to seven members there will be no more votes than

before.

Posner said presently the mayor votes in the event of a three-to-three tie and the at large member would have the seventh vote.

Chris Coates, attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, told Judge Owens that his clients agreed with the division of the wards but opposed the at-large council position.

Owens said, "City business is just not that controversial. In any case, the council members have a right to abstain. I don't see any magic as to if you've got six or seven members. It would be fair to go to either. It gets down to the individual human being, the voter who puts the candidate in office."

"The NAACP is assuming that voters (in predominately black districts) will elect blacks and that voters (in predominately white districts) will vote for whites. You don't know."

Before signing the consent decree, the judge said, "With the size of this community, it's not feasible for every voter to know candidates who run at large."

"The court must realize that the Justice Department is representing the public interest...that is their responsibility. And the views of the Justice Department, compared to the views of the complainant (NAACP) should be given greater credit."

"It's a fair settlement," Owens said. "It's my responsibility to accept it and I will do so by signing it."

Mayor Ernest Nijem said early today, "We're glad it's settled. It's a plan we all can live with. I've always contended that we

need black members on the city council."

Councilman Ashley Hill said, "I think it's real good news that it is settled and that we didn't have to go to court and spend \$800,000 of taxpayers' money and eight years of court battles. We hope we'll now be able to go forward. No one can win a court battle."

"Blacks will have representation and will have their own people," Hill said. "This will improve relations between the white and black people. I'm elated over it."

According to the 1980 Census, the City of Valdosta has a total population of 37,596, of whom 14,806 are black.

The only defendants now left in the suit are members of the Valdosta Board of Education.

Reuben Yancey, attorney for the board, said today that a proposal submitted by the board to the Justice Department was not accepted.

It called for the six members to be elected from the same wards as city councilmen and for three members to be elected at large.

Yancey said negotiations in the board members' part of the lawsuit will continue.

The Lowndes Commissioners' portion of the lawsuit was settled in May.

Their settlement provides for four commission members (rather than three) and created three single-member districts, or wards.

Alvin Payton, a black, was elected to the additional commission post in the August elections.

attained residence in the district they seek to represent as of the time they submit their declaration of candidacy to city officials. If a district councilman changes his residence to a district other than the one he represents, that council seat shall immediately be declared vacant and shall be filled as provided in the city charter. Candidates in the 1986 regular elections will run for staggered terms. Persons elected from Districts 1, 3 and 5 and the person elected at large shall be elected for a term of four years. Persons elected from Districts 2, 4, and 6 shall be elected for a term of two years. Thereafter, all council members will be elected for four year terms. District One is made up of 6,027 people, of which 6,027, or 72.3 percent, are black. This district encompasses southeast Valdosta, roughly everything east of Forrest Street, Fry Street and Griffin Avenue, bounded on the north by Park Avenue and south by the Airport areas. District Three has 6,195 residents, of which 5,173, or 83.5 percent, are black. This district is bordered on the north by One Mile Branch, on the east by Oak Street, and on the south and west by the city limits. District Four has a total population of 6,462 people, of which only 6.7 percent are black. This district consists of all areas east of Slater Street north to Woodrow Wilson Drive and east of Bemiss Road north to Northside Drive. It is bordered on the east by the city limits and North Forrest Street. It is bordered on the south by One Mile Branch, Vallowton Street, Murphy Street and Force Street. District Five has a population of 6,454, of which 4.7 percent are black. This district consists of the areas north (and west) of Gornio Road. It is bordered on the east by Bemiss Road and on the north and west by the city limits. Also included in District Five are streets within the vicinity of

Special Election Set For City Council

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Registered voters from three of the six newly-devised city districts will get a chance to vote in a special election on Feb. 12 to add three additional members to Valdosta City Council. The special election is a requirement included in the settlement of a voting rights lawsuit, filed by the U.S. Justice Department almost a year ago, that challenged the city's at large method of electing councilmen. Chief U.S. District Judge Wilbur D. Owens signed the settlement in the form of a consent decree early Wednesday. The three candidates elected in the Feb. 12 election will take office on March 4 and serve a term of one year, or until the persons elected at the 1986 election take office. After the special election the council will consist of nine councilmen, excluding the mayor. During 1986 regular election, voters will elect seven candidates to the council; three elected from predominately black districts, three elected from predominately white districts and a councilman and the mayor elected at large.

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Chief U.S. District Judge Wilbur D. Owens signed the settlement in the form of a consent decree early Wednesday.

The three candidates elected in the Feb. 12 election will take office on March 4 and serve a term of one year, or until the persons elected at the 1986 election take office.

After the special election the council will consist of nine councilmen, excluding the mayor.

During 1986 regular election, voters will elect seven candidates to the council; three elected from predominately black districts, three elected from predominately white districts and a councilman and the mayor elected at large.

Each council member elected from a district shall reside in the district he represents and shall be voted on solely by the registered voters residing in that district.

The at-large council member may reside anywhere within the city limits and shall be voted on by the registered voters of Valdosta as a whole.

Candidates for a district position on the city council shall have

attained residence in the district they seek to represent as of the time they submit their declaration of candidacy to city officials.

If a district councilman changes his residence to a district other than the one he represents, that council seat shall immediately be declared vacant and shall be filled as provided in the city charter.

Candidates in the 1986 regular elections will run for staggered terms.

Persons elected from Districts 1, 3 and 5 and the person elected at large shall be elected for a term of four years.

Persons elected from Districts 2, 4, and 6 shall be elected for a term of two years.

Thereafter, all council members will be elected for four year terms.

District One is made up of 6,027 people, of which 6,027, or 72.3 percent, are black.

This district encompasses southeast Valdosta, roughly everything east of Forrest Street, Fry Street and Griffin Avenue, bordered on the north by Park Avenue and south by the Statenville Highway.

District Two has a total population of 6,420 and 65.4 percent of those are black.

This district consists mainly of Downtown Valdosta, bordered on the north by One Mile Branch, on the west by Oak and the Old Cityville Road, everything south from there to the city limits, and on the east by Forrest Street.

District Two also includes the Industrial Park and Municipal

Airport areas.

District Three has 6,195 residents, of which 5,173, or 83.5 percent, are black.

This district is bordered on the north by One Mile Branch, on the east by Oak Street, and on the south and west by the city limits.

District Four has a total population of 6,462 people, of which only 6.7 percent are black.

This district consists of all areas east of Slater Street north to Woodrow Wilson Drive and east of Bemiss Road north to Northside Drive. It is bordered on the east by the city limits and North Forrest Street. It is bordered on the south by One Mile Branch, Vallotton Street, Murphy Street and Force Street.

District Five has a population of 6,454, of which 4.7 percent are black.

This district consists of the areas north (and west) of Gornito Road. It is bordered on the east by Bemiss Road and on the north and west by the city limits.

Also included in District Five are streets within the vicinity of Wood Valley Drive.

District Six consists of 6,247 people, of which 5.5 percent are black.

This district is bordered on the north and west by Gornito Road, on the east by Slater Street, and on the south by One Mile Branch.

Also included in District Six is the area within the city limits west of Interstate 75 on Highway 94.

Population figures are based on the 1980 Census.

Voting Time Approaches For City Districts 1, 2, 3

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Valdosta's registered voters will go to the polls Tuesday to elect three members each to the Valdosta City Council and the Valdosta School Board from city districts 1, 2, and 3.

Issues discussed by candidates for these posts have been varied.

All the candidates for the Valdosta City Council have expressed that one of their main goals is for more street paving in their districts and in Valdosta as a whole.

Other issues discussed by city council candidates at recent political forums are the need for more black employees in city government, better police protection, and making the city "more attractive" to industry.

Also, since this is the first time in history that three blacks have a good chance of being elected to the city council, all candidates have indicated they will make strong efforts to work with present council members and not against them.

Some council candidates have said if elected they will set up a community action group to inform citizens in their respective district on happenings in city government and inform them on decisions that will affect them in any way.

Other issues brought up by the candidates in recent weeks are rerouting the set of railroad tracks north of the James Beck Overpass, upgrading working conditions for employees in Valdosta's industries, urging city businesses to utilize job training programs such as On-The-Job Training, and improving inadequate government housing in black communities.

Candidates running for the posts are as follows:

District 1-Alphonso Roosevelt Hall and Willie Houseal.

District 2-Thelma J. Branham. Iras DuBard,

Robert Dinkins, Bunnis "B" Williams and Dr. L.W. Williams.

District 3-James L. Gibbs, Jaunita Jackson Parker and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers.

The main issues of concern in the Valdosta School Board races stem from too few black teachers and administrators in the Valdosta school system.

A related issue discussed by school board candidates is for the hiring of more male black instructors so to give black students stronger role models.

Other flaws candidates have said need improving are the quality of teachers and administrators in general and communication among teachers, parents, and students.

One topic on which candidates have varying opinions are if too much emphasis is placed on athletics and not academics at the high school level.

School Board Candidates have stated different ways on how to deal with the problems in handout literature and at political forums. Now is up to city voters to decide what and who they want.

Candidates vying for the Valdosta School Board posts are:

District 1-Willie Rayford, running unopposed.

District 2-Kelly D. Dawsey and Minnie A. Martin.

District 3-Marie Gibbs, Truoise Taylor Nash and Donald Kenneth "Butch" Williams

Voters in District 1 are to vote at the Forrest Street United Methodist Church at 303 N. Forrest St. Voters in District 2 vote at the Pinevale-Lomax School Gymnasium and voters in District 3 vote at the Craig Center at 1104 W. Gordon St.

Polls open Tuesday and 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m.

Vote Tuesday

Hours from now, voters in southern Valdosta will help decide the future path city government takes. Or possibly they'll sit back and let the city take it's own path, only to complain later when it's too late.

The polls open at 7 a.m. Tuesday for the city election which will decide three Valdosta Council Races and two Valdosta Board of Education races. This is the first city election under the new district system of voting here, and though only three districts are up for grabs, this is a key vote. This is the one that will begin to shape city council and the school board as we head into the late 1980s and beyond.

It's a new beginning, and that's part of the reason why a high-voter turnout is so necessary. This election easily could serve as a model for the ones to follow, and a high turnout of registered voters is the type of model we need.

In the past we've been fortunate to attract 50 percent of the voters to the polls. The majority

must participate if those elected are truly to be representatives of the people, and not representatives merely of a few who cared enough to cast a ballot.

The candidates have worked hard and deserve an answer from us on election day. They have volunteered themselves to serve and have tried several means of conveying their messages as to why they are the best men and women for the job.

They have spent hours upon hours seeking office, and all they ask in return is a few minutes of the voters' time. It's a privilege we shouldn't have to be asked to perform.

Districts 1, 2, and 3 on both city council and the school board are being decided Tuesday. Voting will take place at Forrest Street United Methodist Church (District 1), Pinevale-Lomax School Gymnasium (District 2) and the Craig Center (District 3). Further information is available as easily as dialing 333-5100.

Vote for any candidate you please, but vote.

Valdosta, Ga., Mon., Jan. 7, 1985

Forum Held Sunday

Council Candidates Debate Issues

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Though qualifying for Valdosta's Feb. 12 special election won't begin until next Monday, candidates for city council districts 1, 2 and 3 got their first chance to air their views to the public Sunday night.

About 31 people attended a question and answer forum, held at the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church on Force Street and sponsored by the Valdosta Chapter of the NAACP.

In a related matter, James Gibbs, of 911 W. Mary St., chose the time to announce his candidacy for city council District 3. Gibbs, 34, is employed as the resident manager of the Azalea Woods Apartments.

Discussing their platforms at the meeting were Gibbs, Willie Houseal, running for the District 1 seat, L.W. Williams, running for District 2, and Iras DuBard, also a candidate for the District 2 seat.

Speaking for District 2 candidate Bunnis Williams was his wife, Alma Williams.

Questions asked of the candidates covered a wide spectrum of topics, from what they would do to start a public transportation system in the city to investigating the methods of promoting city police and fire department personnel.



Times Staff Photo by Nadine Shochet

Alma Williams, Candidate Bunnis William's Wife, Answers Questions

In opening statements DuBard said, "Blacks have been paying taxes and have not been equally represented. One of my main concerns is that it's been said that there are no qualified black people to run, but the past doesn't show that (government officials) were representing black people.

"If you want to bring about change, you've got to be the person who will talk to someone, find out everyone's opinion," DuBard said. "I don't plan to say 'Hey, that's not in my ward so it's not my problem.' I'm concerned with Valdosta and think I can bring about effective changes. We

can do it with the help of the people."

Alma Williams said her husband is running on the platform of representing both blacks and whites in District 2. "He wants to be available to the public and wants to be able to represent the community," she said.

"Problems have been thrown at high officials," Ms. Williams said. "His (Williams') position is you have to look at the problem and work together, not force someone to act.

"The most important thing is getting the problems from the community and working with people instead of someone saying 'I'll take care of it' and nothing is done," she said. "That has been the case in the past."

Houseal, noting minority rights programs and others he has backed in the past, said his position is similar to that of Dubbard's, adding, "We need fair representation and democracy."

Houseal said his concerns lie in furnishing improved recreational facilities in the city, especially Scott Park, and to try to get improvements for better government housing in low income areas.

"This election is only going to be for one year," Houseal said. "I don't expect anything in one year. That's not a long time and we'll have to get in there with the people already in office and learn.

"I'm not going to stand here and lie and tell you something's going to be done," Houseal said. "Nobody has all the answers, but we'll have to seek to find them.

L. W. Williams said one main

plank in his platform was pushing to see that more city streets are paved and working on other traffic problems.

On the special election, Williams said, "We will have a transitional system on the city council. They (black representatives) will make an entire sweep of change in city council... Instead of this 'black and white thing' we should work together to bring about a betterment of the city."

Gibbs told the audience some of the major planks in his platform are to seek for fair employment for blacks in city government jobs and to bring more industry into Valdosta.

"I would like to set up a task force to see what the people want and set my priorities from there," Gibbs said.

"You've got to support your city councilmen," Gibbs said. "If folks are not supporting them, we won't get anything done. We're not going to get anything we don't fight for."

The special election was mandated after the settlement of a civil rights lawsuit against the Valdosta City Council by the U.S. Justice Department.

It will put into office representatives of three predominantly black districts until the 1986 elections. Then, all city council seats will be up for grabs under the newly-devised ward system.



Times Staff Photo by Laura Harris

Bunnis 'B' Williams Speaking At The Political Forum At Southeast Elementary

At 2nd Political Forum

Candidates Speak On Issues

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

As the city's Feb. 12 special election nears, candidates for Valdosta City Council had their second chance to expound on their campaign platforms at a political forum Friday night.

Ten of the nine city council candidates attended the forum, sponsored by the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Crime Watch Committee and held at the Southeast Elementary School.

Though time was somewhat limited for the nine candidates present, all had the chance to tell of what they consider to be their number one priority if they are elected.

Willie Houseal, candidate for District 1, said that after he established a "working relationship" with present city council members he would study the upcoming \$6.5 bond issue to be voted on by city voters. The bond issue is for a capital improvements program to be used in all parts of Valdosta.

"I, as a councilman, would like to have input into the plan," Houseal said, commenting that the bond referendum would be a key factor in a variety of improvements in the city.

Alphonso Roosevelt Hall, also a candidate for the District 1 seat, said his first priority would be to provide any needed assistance to other city councilmen and then survey the needs of the citizens in his district before taking action.

Hall also said he would commit himself to getting money to improve streets through providing more paving, street lighting and sidewalks in his district. Hall said he would also work to get more black people to participate in government by voting and taking a stance on issues affecting them.

District 2 Candidate Bunnis "B" Williams said if elected he would concentrate on providing more fire protection for Valdosta's Southside.

"I know what one house fire (on some city streets) could do to a whole neighborhood in the southside of Valdosta," Williams said. "We need more substations."

District 2 Candidate Iras Dubard said, "First, I would assess my community's needs. I would like to provide means for money

to go to the Southside, not just my district."

Dubard said he would also work to get more blacks involved in city government and work to get better recreational facilities in South Valdosta.

District 2 Candidate Thelma J. Branham told the audience she also would determine what priorities are in her district before initiating any action.

Ms. Branham said one of her main concerns would be to work toward rerouting the railroad track north of the James Beck Overpass so the track would stop impeding traffic flow.

L. W. Williams, also a candidate for the District 2 seat, said, "I would work with others" on the city council and said he would like to see the city's Southside provided with better recreational facilities.

"One, two, or three can do only so much," Williams said. "You have to work for the progress of the (entire) city."

District 2 Candidate Robert Dinkins was not present at the forum.

District 3 Candidate Juanita Jackson Parker said one of her main concerns was about the problem of the city's water system and the high level of trihalomethanes, suspected cancer-causing substances, present in the city's water supply.

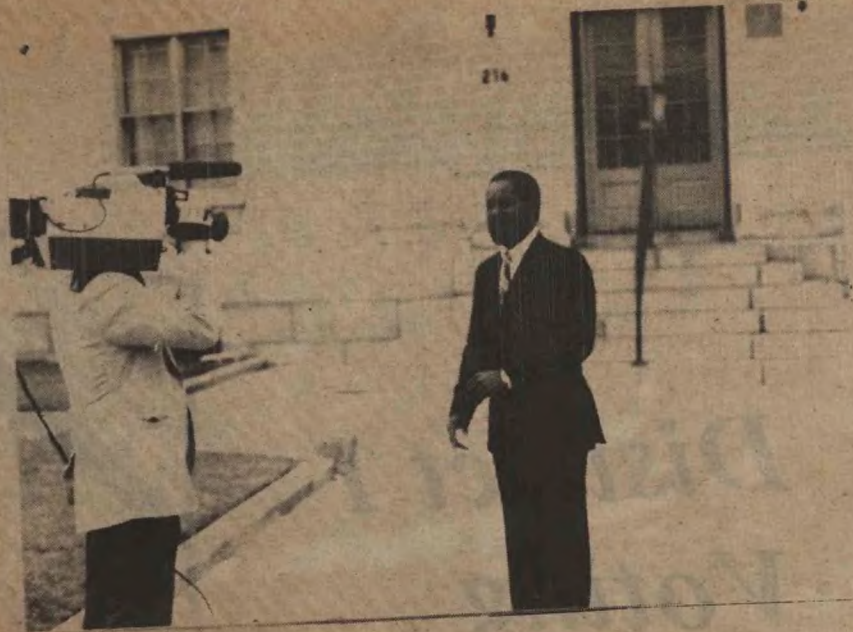
Joseph "Sonny" Vickers, District 3 candidate, said he would work toward forming a community action group that could study problems within his district. Vickers said he would also help get more black voters in his district registered to vote.

District 3 Candidate James L. Gibbs said his main priority was for more jobs for people.

"I'm a strong believer in folks working and carrying their own," Gibbs said. "Poverty is the mother of crime...Jobs are the most important thing I see we need at this time."

About 30 spectators attended the political forum.

The city's special election was scheduled after the settlement of a civil rights lawsuit against the City of Valdosta by the U. S. Justice Department.



I am confident in my abilities to provide aggressive leadership for District 1, City Council. I will work towards fostering a more positive image for our district and Valdosta as a whole. I am willing to offer my services as we work together for continued growth in our community. A strong community needs strong leadership.



Houseal Announces Bid

Willie Houseal of Valdosta announced this morning he will be running for the District 1 city council seat in the special election to be held here in February.

Houseal is a teacher in the Lowndes County school system and is the director of Winnersville Coalition Consultants. Qualifying for the posts is not scheduled to begin until January, but Houseal said he wanted to make sure the public knew he intended to have his hat in the ring.

The special election was set after Valdosta agreed to end its at-large voting and go to a district system that will have six council members elected from wards and one chosen at large.

Vote For "Change" VOTE Willie Houseal For City Council Post 1

- Vietnam War Veteran
- Free Mason,
- Valdosta Lodge #19
- Instructor of Math and Reading Lowndes Co. Board of Education
- Dir. Winnersville Coalition
- Valdosta/Lowndes County RIF Coordinator



"I'll strive to maintain adequate fire protection, reducing community crime, to gain an equitable return on your tax dollar while maintaining an open mind toward industries recruitment, thus allowing better jobs for the citizens of this community."

Street Paving Eyed By Prospective District 1 Councilmen



ALPHONSO ROOSEVELT HALL
Wants Street Paving

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Editors Note: This is the first of a three part series focusing on the candidate for the special election for the Valdosta City Council.

The two candidates running for the District 1 Valdosta City Council have strong ideas on priorities they will strive for if elected to the council post on Feb. 12.

The special election, part of the settlement of the U.S. Justice Department's civil rights lawsuit against the City of Valdosta will put a representative of three predominately black districts on the city council for a one-year term.

Candidates Alphonso Roosevelt Hall and Willie Houseal are vying for the District 1 council seat.

Hall, 56, is a native of Valdosta and resides at 1312 Bethune St. He is employed at the Valdosta Junior High School as a social studies teacher.

He graduated from the Dasher High School and studied at the Maryland University in Japan and the University of Southern Mississippi.

Hall received a bachelor's of science degree from Valdosta State College, a master's degree in administration and supervision and a master's degree in secondary education.

Hall is a Sunday school teacher and was retired from the U. S. Air Force.

During his military service Hall was awarded the Bronze Star for service in Vietnam and the Meritorious Service Medal for his leadership as noncommissioned officer in charge of the Air Force Drug Abuse Rehabilitation Center.

Hall said if elected he plans to start to work the first month and not use the one-year term as a learning period.

"I would like to establish some kind of personal contact between citizens so they can have input before it comes

before council," Hall said. "I want to be a link to the citizens in District 1."

Among Hall's goals are to set up a system of funding to pave more dirt streets in the city, to work to see that his district gets "it's fair share" of city services, and to communicate with citizens before discussions at city council meetings so that his inputs represent the wishes of people from District 1.

"I don't think the (city) services are that bad, but they could be improved," Hall said. "They should be equally divided throughout District 1, not to any special interest groups."

"Also, as a councilman, I would want to work closely with the Chamber of Commerce and other governments for new industry in Valdosta and help expand present industries," he said. "I think we should make Valdosta more attractive to industry with our schools, water and sewer and our work force."

Hall says advantages he has over his opponent are that he has training in administration and supervision and experience on an advisory council to the commanding general at Lackland Air Force Base.

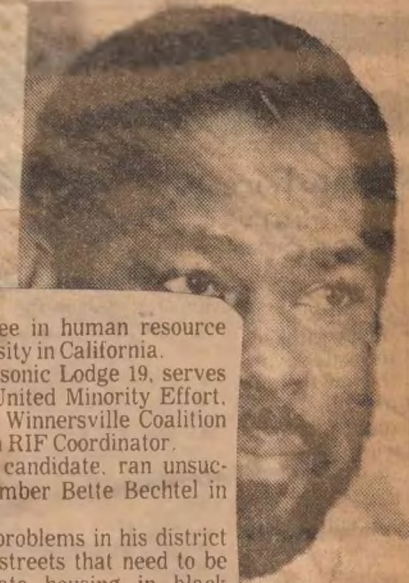
"The success of a councilman depends on his communication with citizens in his district and working with other council members and leaders throughout the community without compromising his goals," Hall said.

Hall is married to the former Bessie Mae Cushion and they have three children, Ingrid Yvonne, Sherre Angeli and Aaron. They are members of the Baptist Faith.

District 1 Candidate Willie Houseal, 33, resides at 1023 Bunch St. and presently works as reading and math teacher for Lowndes, assigned to the Georgia Sheriff's Ranch.

Houseal graduated from the Pinevale High School. His other educational background includes doctorate work in public administration at Nova University in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., a bachelor's degree in sociology at St.

WILLIE HOUSEAL
To Work With Council



Leo College and a master's degree in human resource management at Pepperdine University in California.

He is a member of Valdosta Masonic Lodge 19, serves on the Board of Directors of the United Minority Effort, and is director and founder of the Winnersville Coalition civil rights group and Lowndes Area RIF Coordinator.

Houseal, a former city council candidate, ran unsuccessfully against City Council Member Bette Bechtel in the last election.

Houseal said some of the basic problems in his district he would like to see resolved are streets that need to be paved, traffic hazards, inadequate housing in black communities and inconsistent zoning of property in Valdosta.

"First, I would like to establish a working relationship with the council members," Houseal said. "We know this (ward system) is complex to citizens, but changes have to come about to get things done."

"I have to let the people know I'm confident in my abilities to provide leadership for the people in District 1 and will work toward fostering a more positive image for our district and Valdosta as a whole...I feel that a strong community needs strong leadership."

Houseal said some advantages he has over his opponent are his strong leadership and management background, his past experience with government officials, and his being more sensitive to the community's needs and communicating with the residents in District 1.

"It's obvious that the ward system is prevalent for one reason, that is because of the lack of representation," he said. "We'll be patient, but we hope things we bring forth will be a priority with the council and then we can get on with city business."

"An open mind is the key here, maintaining an open mind," Houseal said.

Houseal is married to the former Cleopatra Sanders and they have three children.

Candidates Get In

Valdosta, Ga., Thurs., Feb. 7, 1985

Last Minute Campaigning

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

With only five more days left until the special election, candidates for Valdosta City Council and Valdosta School Board had the chance to peddle their platforms and drum up support at a political forum held Wednesday night.

The forum, sponsored by the Women's Political Caucus, was held at the Georgia Power Company Auditorium.

Candidates had two-minute periods to talk on the basics of their platforms and afterward questions were taken from the audience.

Audience members at the forum seemed prepared than at earlier forums, asking detailed questions to several candidates.

One addressed to all city council candidates questioned how instrumental each candidate was in getting the ward system adopted in Valdosta.

"I'm a retired serviceman and many things they're talking about I was not involved in," said District 1 Candidate Alphonso Roosevelt Hall, adding that he was involved in a drug rehabilitation program earlier but in the early 1960s was the first black member on a Parent-Teachers Association board in Mississippi.

"A group of us came together and worked for representation," said Willie Houseal, also a candidate for District 1. "I stayed there until a settlement came about...I was totally involved in the transaction and I think I'm capable of working with the system."

Most city council candidates from districts 2 and 3 also claimed similar roles in the implementation of the ward system.

However, District 3 Candidate Joseph "Sonny" Vickers received an ovation for his statements on how the ward system was started here.

"I prayed and paid my taxes to get it done," Vickers said. "Some are saying they did this and that. The Justice Department came to my house and carried a briefcase of information back with them...But the Justice Department filed suit and some people jumped on (the bandwagon) and went along with it."

Vickers then turned to all the city council candidates and said, "Did you do it for betterment (of the city) or for your own

glory?"

City council candidates also were questioned on if they would vote themselves a pay raise while in office, referring to a salary increase the Valdosta City Council voted themselves recently.

Most candidates answered no, with some saying they would have to "look at the facts" before deciding.

significant," DuBard said. "It was about 10 years since they had a pay raise."

"It's easy to judge people when you're not in their shoes," Vickers said.

Candidates for Valdosta School Board were asked what programs to enhance the quality of education would they adopt that are not offered in Valdosta schools now.

"I have one particular concern I think is important which ties in with parent and community involvement and providing the best education for our children," said School Board Candidate Kelly D. Dawsey, of District 2. "It is some type of tutorial program, at no cost, for children who need that kind of help."

"It needs to be pointed out that the role of school board members are policy-making, to assist with the budget and deal with the superintendent, who in turn deals with principals, who deal with their schools," Dawsey said.

Marie Gibbs, candidate for School Board District 3, said, "I don't have one specific program, but my main goal is to intergrate the schools and segregate the classrooms," adding that athletics shouldn't be emphasized over academics, a main plank she has stated in her platform.

District 3 Candidate Truoise Taylor Nash said she feels the Valdosta schools are "pretty well loaded" with good academic programs.

"My goal is to motivate children with the opportunities they have and go from there," Ms. Nash said.

District 3 Candidate Donald "Butch" Williams said, "The Valdosta System is a fine system, but could stand some improvement."

"I would work to maintain the goals of programs we have," Williams said, adding that he would look for other good programs after studying their success at other schools.

School Board Candidates Willie Rayford and Minnie A. Martin were absent from the forum because of illness, a spokesman said.

Not including the candidates about 40 people attended the forum.

City council members Ashley Hill, Jack May and Jo Ann Hartment were also present.

District 1 Candidate Hall, District 2 Candidate Iras DuBard, and District 3 Candidate Vickers indicated they probably would have voted on the pay raise under the circumstances.

"If I had been on the council that night I would have voted for the pay increase," Hall said. "You have to look at the facts."

"I was at the meeting and what the council said was



Times Staff Photo by Laura Harris

Jaunita Jackson Parker Speaks At The Political Forum At The GP Auditorium

Our Recommendations

Tuesday's special city election in Valdosta is a landmark, an election certain to put more blacks on City Council than at any time in its history. More importantly, the candidates for the three seats to be filled are as qualified as any group of candidates ever to run for election here.

The campaigns have been run on a positive note and there may well be at least two runoffs before the winner is decided.

The *Times* today makes its recommendations on the three City Council seats to be filled. The candidates have responded to questions from reporters and made their views and qualifications known in public forums.

A recommendation for a candidate does not amount to an endorsement of any future actions by that candidate. Instead, the recommendation is for the candidates the newspaper feels to be best qualified for the post.

The following are the recommendations of *The Times*:

District 1

The *Times* recommends Willie Houseal for the District 1 seat on City Council. Houseal has been active here in community projects, has the education and ideas needed for City Council and has outlined a program of progress for which he promises to work if elected.

District 2

The *Times* recommends Bunnis "B" Williams as the candidate best qualified for the District 2 seat on City Council. Williams has a fine record of quiet but firm community leadership. In addition, Williams has outlined a program he plans to pursue if elected which would benefit all Valdostans.

District 3

The *Times* recommends Joseph "Sonny" Vickers to fill the District 3 seat on City Council.

Vickers has a long history of community work. He has worked quietly, and sometimes not so quietly, in seeking to improve racial relations in the community and to solve problems. Vickers is outspoken and candid. He has a reputation for being a hard worker and would bring these qualities to City Council.

For Tuesday's Election

Workers Get Local Polls Ready

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

With only two days left before Election Day, pollworkers have readied themselves for the turnout of voters for the city's special election.

Voters will go to the polls Tuesday to elect members to the Valdosta City Council and Valdosta School Board from city districts 1, 2, and 3.

"We've attempted to put ads in the paper to assure that people know where to vote," said Robert Goddard, city elections superintendent. "We have a list of voters by precinct now, but we may have some problems with that because it's hard to determine by addresses who lives in what precinct."

Goddard said voting ballots have been simplified in that three separate sets of ballots have been made, one set to be distributed to each of the three districts.

For example, a voter from District 1 would see only names of the council members and school board members running in his or her district and not any others.

"It should be extremely easy," Goddard said. Also, Goddard has drummed up experienced poll managers and workers, with a "good even mixture" of black and white poll workers at each precinct.

Goddard said the poll workers attended one of two work sessions held this past Tuesday to familiarize themselves and be trained on election procedures. A test ballot was scheduled to run Friday afternoon to test the vote tabulating equipment.

"Also, we've made up a schedule of election events and information that was mailed to each candidate instructing them about what they could and could not do," Goddard said.

"We're doing everything we can to have a fair and honest election," Goddard said.

Though there has been a history of black voter apathy in Valdosta, candidates expect this election to be better because it is strictly for representatives of predominantly black districts.

However, some candidates have expressed concerns that procedures under this first election by precincts could alienate some voters in the three predominantly black districts.

One candidate said he believes the ward map presented by the city outlined in the newspaper is ambiguous and makes it hard for citizens to determine what district they're in and where they are to vote.

Voters in District 1 are to vote at the Forrest Street United Methodist Church at 303 N. Forrest St. Voters in

District 2 vote at the Pinevale-Lomax School Gymnasium and voters in District 3 vote at the Craig Center at 1104 W. Gordon St.

People residing in borderline areas who don't know what district they vote in should phone 333-5100 for more information.

Candidates for the Valdosta City Council posts are as follows:

District 1: Alphonso Roosevelt Hall and Willie Houseal
District 2: Thelma J. Branham, Iras DuBard, Robert Dinkins, Bunnis "B" Williams, and Dr. L. W. Williams.

District 3: James L. Gibbs, Janita Jackson Parker and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers.

Candidates for the Valdosta School Board are:
District 1: Willie Rayford.
District 2: Kelly D. Dawsey and Minnie A. Martin.

District 3: Marie Gibbs, Truoise Taylor Nash and Donald Kenneth "Butch" Williams.

The special election is the result of part of the settlement of a civil rights lawsuit against the city by the U. S. Justice Department.

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District 3-James L. Gibbs, Jaunita Jackson Parker and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers.
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District 1-Willie Rayford.
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2 Valdosta Councilmen Chosen; Runoff Set



Willie Houseal Celebrates Victory In District 1 Race

Times Staff Photo by Laura Harris

District 1	Votes	Percentages
A.R. Hall	163	31.8
Willie Houseal	348	68.1
District 2		
Thelma Branham	89	18
Robert Dinkins	49	9.9
Iras DuBard	76	15.4
Bunnis Williams	179	35.7
L.W. Williams	105	20.7
District 3		
James Gibbs	93	11.1
Jaunita Parker	158	19.3
Joseph Vickers	588	69.5

terms.
According to City Elections Superintendent Robert A. Goddard Jr., 1,959 of the 6,150 registered voters in Districts 1, 2, and 3 turned out to vote Tuesday, or 31.8 percent.

"It was a good day for the City of Valdosta and we tried to run a good election," Goddard said. "The only bad thing was we didn't have the turnout we should've had."

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By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Yesterday city voters from Districts 1 and 3 chose the candidates they want representing them on the Valdosta City Council, but voters from District 2 will have to return to the polls for a runoff to decide who they for the job.

Willie Houseal, of District 1, and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers, of District 3, won their council seats by large margins over their opponents.

However, because no candidate won a majority in District 2, as expected, a runoff election will be held in two weeks between candidates Bunnis "B" Williams and Dr. L.W. Williams.

District 2 voters will return to the polls on Tuesday, Feb. 26, to elect either one of the two candidates. (See related story elsewhere on this page).

Including absentee ballots, Houseal received 348 votes, or about 69 percent of those cast in District 1. His opponent Alphonso Roosevelt Hall received 163 votes.

"I feel elated over the victory because it was won for the common people," Houseal said. "This election was the best thing for Valdosta since Reconstruction, and I can see in some of the peoples' eyes

how much it meant to them."

On the poor voter turnout, Houseal said, "I think the adverse (weather) conditions did put a damper on this election. The wind chill factor was 10 degrees yesterday morning. Still, it was a history-making event."

Houseal's opponent Hall said after the election, "I feel we have the best candidate of all the races. He'll make an excellent councilman and I'll help him, starting right now."

Vickers, winner for the District 3 council post, won by a landslide victory of 588 votes, or about 70 percent of the votes cast in that district.

Vickers said, "I feel very good about my victory. I'm grateful to God, my community, my family and my campaign committee.

Vickers said he also thought his opponents ran exceptional races.

"Mrs. (Jaunita Jackson) Parker worked very hard and ran a very aggressive and clean campaign," Vickers said. "Gibbs is a newcomer to the area and also he announced (his candidacy) late. Perhaps that may have contributed to his poor showing.

The three candidates chosen during this election will take office on March 4 and serve a

term of one year.

Until then the council will consist of nine councilmen, excluding the mayor.

During the 1986 elections voters will elect seven candidates to the council: three elected from predominately black districts 1, 2, and 3; three elected from predominately white districts 4, 5, and 6; and a councilman and the mayor elected at large.

The at large members may reside anywhere within the city limits and shall be voted on by the registered voters of Valdosta as a whole.

If a district councilman changes his residence to a district other than the one he represents, that council seat shall immediately be declared vacant and shall be filled as provided in the city charter.

Candidates in the 1986 elections will run for staggered

terms.

According to City Elections Superintendent Robert A. Goddard Jr., 1,959 of the 6,150 registered voters in Districts 1, 2, and 3 turned out to vote Tuesday, or 31.8 percent.

"It was a good day for the City of Valdosta and we tried to run a good election," Goddard said. "The only bad thing was we didn't have the turnout we should've had."

Willie Houseal Celebrates Victory In District 1 Race

Times Staff Photo by Laura Harris



L. W. WILLIAMS	
District 3	
James Gibbs	373
Jaunita Parker	158
Joseph Vickers	588
	111
	19.5
	69.5

Special-election winners prepare to take seats

By Jamie Lucke
Staff writer

VALDOSTA, Ga. — The first blacks elected under Valdosta's new district-voting system will take their seats on the Valdosta City Council and Board of Education March 4.

Before then, a run-off will be held Feb. 26 in the Council District 2 race between L.W. Williams, a dentist, and Bunnis "B" Williams, director of guidance at Lowndes High School.

Bunnis Williams received 179 votes or 35.9 percent in the five-person race. Dr. Williams received 105 votes or 21.1 percent in the race.

Outright winners in Tuesday's court-ordered special election for council seats were Willie Houseal in Council District 1, and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers in Council District 3.

Houseal is a teacher at Georgia Sheriffs Boys Ranch. Vickers is a former assistant plant-manager at Chemical Specialties Inc.

School board winners were Willie Rayford in District 1, Minnie A. Martin in District 2 and Donald "Butch" Williams in District 3.

Rayford, a self-employed business-

man, was the only unopposed candidate in the six races. Mrs. Martin is a salesman at a Valdosta car dealership. Williams is director of social services at South Georgia Medical Center.

Those elected will serve one-year terms.

Next year, elections will be held for all council and school board seats and the mayorship, as ordered by the court settlement that replaced at-large voting in Valdosta with a district system.

City Election Superintendent Robert Goddard expressed disappointment at the light turnout of voters. According to official returns, only 32 percent or 1,962 of the 6,187 eligible voters cast ballots.

"We need to double that [turnout] next time," Vickers said.

The elections, held in the three predominantly black districts, were the first time blacks could run with any certainty of winning.

"I feel I have a chance to be part of a historic event and open up new avenues for the city of Valdosta," Houseal said. "We'll get the



Bunnis Williams



L.W. Williams



Willie Houseal



Joseph Vickers



Willie Rayford



Donald Williams

people more involved. . . . They feel good about it. I feel good about it."

Mrs. Martin, a former substitute teacher, said she is eager to begin working with other school officials to improve academics, but she plans to study the situation before taking any stands.

"I've just got to get in there and see what it's about. I'm eager to know," she said.

Before Tuesday, only one black had ever been elected to the Valdosta City Council during modern times. . . . member of the school

board was an appointee.

The city's population is about 40 percent black.

Council election results:

District 1: Willie Houseal, 348 votes or 68.1 percent; Alphonso Roosevelt Hall, 163 votes or 31.9 percent

District 2: Bunnis "B" Williams, 179 votes or 35.9 percent; L.W. Williams, 105 votes or 21.1 percent; Thelma J. Branham, 89 votes or 17.9 percent; Iras Dubard, 76 votes or 15.3 percent; Robert Dinkins, 49 votes or 9.8 percent.

District 3: Joseph "Sonny" Vickers,

588 votes or 70.1 percent; Juanita Jackson Parker, 158 votes or 18.8 percent; James Gibbs, 93 votes or 11.1 percent.

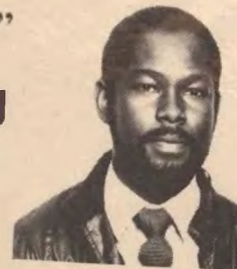
School board election results:

District 1: Willie Rayford, 480 votes or 100 percent.

District 2: Minnie A. Martin, 269 votes or 54.9 percent; Kelly D. Dawsey, 221 votes or 45.1 percent.

District 3: Donald "Butch" Williams, 599 votes or 73.9 percent; Truise Taylor Nash, 116 votes or 14.3 percent; Marie Gibbs, 96 votes or 11.8 percent.

Vote For "Change"
VOTE
Willie Houseal
For City Councilman of
Post No. 1



Vietnam War Veteran
Free Mason
Valdosta Lodge #19
Instructor of Math & Reading
Lowndes Co. Board of Ed.
Dir. of Winnersville Coalition
Valdosta/Lowndes County
RIP Coordinator

"I'll strive to maintain adequate fire protection, reducing community crime, to gain an equitable return on your tax dollar while maintaining an open mind toward industries recruitment, thus allowing better jobs for the citizens of this community."

By Jon

DISTRICT
1

Official Ballot for Special Election for the City of Valdosta
Lowndes County, Georgia, to be held February 12, 1985.

NOTICE: Use this ballot only if you are registered to vote in
District 1.

FOR CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT #1

VOTE
FOR
ONE

ALPHONSO ROOSEVELT HALL

WILLIE HOUSEAL

(8) →

FOR BOARD OF EDUCATION
DISTRICT #1

VOTE
FOR
ONE

WILLIE RAYFORD

(12) →

Valdosta School Board

District 1

Willie Rayford

Votes

480

Percentage

100

District 2

Kelly Dawsey
Minnie Martin

221
269

44.6
55.3

District 3

Marie Gibbs
Truoise T. Nash
Donald Williams

96
116
599

11.7
14.5
73.6

4 Valdosta blacks win elections

By Jamie Lucke
Staff writer

VALDOSTA, Ga. — Willie Houseal and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers were elected yesterday to the Valdosta City Council in a court-ordered special election for three council and three school board races the candidates hailed as historic.

They will become only the second and third blacks to serve on the council.

The outcome of a third council race was still in doubt with a runoff expected between two of the five candidates.

Donald "Butch" Williams and Willie Rayford were elected to the Valdosta Board of Education, where they also will be the second and third blacks to serve on the board. Rayford ran unopposed.

Houseal, 33, a teacher at Georgia Sheriffs Boys Ranch, received 68.1 percent of the vote to defeat Alphonso Roosevelt Hall, a teacher at Lowndes Middle School, in the District 1 race.

Both Houseal and Hall were unsuccessful candidates a year ago in the city's last at-large election.

Houseal was a founder of one of



Willie Houseal
Valdosta City Council

the civil rights groups that sued the Valdosta City Council to abolish at-large voting.

Houseal's organization, Winnersville Coalition Consultants, was a plaintiff in a suit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union that later was consolidated with one filed by the U.S. Justice Department.

Yesterday's special election in the three predominantly black districts was required as part of the settlement of the suit.

The winners will serve only one year until February 1988, when all the council seats and the mayor's post will be up for regular election.

This election was the first time that blacks could run with any cer-



Willie Rayford
Valdosta Board of Education

tainty of winning.

In the District 3 council race, Vickers received 69.5 percent to defeat Juanita Jackson Parker, who received 19.3 percent, and James L. Gibbs, who received 11 percent.

The turnout was sparse with only an estimated 1,700 voting out of 6,150 registered voters.

Early unofficial results last night included the following.

Council District 1: Willie Houseal, 344; Alphonso Roosevelt Hall, 161.

Council District 3: James L. Gibbs, 91; Juanita Jackson Parker, 158; Joseph "Sonny" Vickers, 588.

School District 3: Marie Gibbs, 93; Truoise Taylor Nash, 115; Donald "Butch" Williams, 582.

Councilman-Elect Says Thanks

Please accept this letter as my gratitude to the many people who participated (directly and indirectly) in the Special Election on February 12, 1985.

A special thanks is extended to the voters in District 1 for going to the polls under adverse conditions (i.e. change of polling sites and unusually cold weather) to cast their votes for their choice candidate(s).

Many would agree that their vote really did count, for true democracy was exercised in Valdosta.

We must be reminded that changes are many times met with resistance, though changes must be made if progress is to take place. Experiencing ward voting for the first time was confusing for some people.

Hopefully, information obtained through this experience will be beneficial to the Registrars Office in making the

1986 Election Year operate more effectively.

The Valdosta Times should also be commended for the interest displayed by reporter, Richard Sellers and Managing Editor, Archie McKay. These gentlemen are a credit to their profession and this community.

With Spring season approaching, it is hoped that the 1,600 registered voters who did not vote in District 1 will consider changing from apathetic attitudes toward voting to citizens who will double the voter turnout in 1986.

Again, I would like to thank all the organizations, members of the Registrars Office and the voters in District 1 for making February 12, 1985, "A Day in History for the City of Valdosta."

Willie Houseal
City Councilman Elect

Houseal Moves Into Hotter Politics District 1 Councilman Expects Heavy Scrutinization

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Willie Houseal, one of three councilmen-elect for the City of Valdosta, said he realizes during this year his and the actions of the other new councilmen will be highly scrutinized.

Houseal, of City District 1, will take a council seat in March along with two other newly elected councilmen, making it the first time in Valdosta's history three black councilmen had seats on the council.

Houseal and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers, of District 3, were elected to council seats at a special election held Tuesday. A runoff election will be held between Bunnis "B" Williams and Dr. L.W. Williams in two weeks for the District 2 seat.

"I think it'll be a learning process," Houseal said. "Some things will be done this first year, but — realistically — six months will go by before we initiate some of our projects that we want the city council to act on."

"I plan to use new ideas and to approach former candidates about their ideas," he said. "I'd like to work closely with those people to get them to help me, because during the campaign I heard a lot of good things from those candidates."

Houseal, 33, said two of his main objectives he would like to accomplish before 1986 are to help the upgrade services for the elderly and provide more recreational facilities in Valdosta.

"I didn't have the facilities when I was growing up," said Houseal, who is a native of Valdosta. "We can get grants to upgrade



Willie Houseal: 'A Learning Process'

recreational facilities in our area and Valdosta as a whole.

"I would like to see at least three additional parks in Valdosta, at least one of those in District 1," he said.

"These are tangible things," he said. "Other things you have to promote through policy and procedures, such as fire departments; hiring and firing practices; services; and sanitation."

On if he will run for council again in 1986, Houseal said, "The council seats will be a pressure spot. I'm aware of this and it depends upon how I handle the pressure."

"I will almost have to run again to see some of those things completed," he added.

Houseal said he feels the weakest point of the Valdosta city government is its insensitivity to citizens and lack of communication.

"It's a lack of sensitivity on the officials' part, which gave us a reason to go through the courts for the wards," he said. "If they were sensitive to our needs we wouldn't have the ward system in the first place."

"I'll work to bridge that gap in communication," he said. "I want to be able to tell people what's going on in laymen's terms and hope the people will support me in my endeavors."

Houseal, also president of the Winnersville Coalition Consultants, a civil rights group, said there will be no "conflict of

Willie Houseal Moving Into Public's Eye ...See Page 3A

interest is concerned.

"We (the Winnersville Coalition) will be more interested in problems in organizations and businesses instead of individual type problems in 1985," Houseal said. "We possibly will be soliciting contracts; going into organizations and looking into employee morale and low output in private industry."

"The organization was formed because I had a personal problem and when I found out others had the same problem, I realized it was a social problem," he said. "The Consultants was formed to alleviate problems we found in the community."

"One reason is the Winnersville Consultants will take another direction in 85...We can operate as council persons rather than a civil rights group," he said. "We hope to function as a private organization with profit in mind."

Houseal cited several programs the group started, such as community beautification projects and the RIFF reading program, and also the part the organization played in the civil rights lawsuit against the city to establish the ward system of government here.

"As a race, many organizations were 'carrying the baton,' it's just that the Winnersville Coalition and NAACP carried it across the finish line," he said.

can wear several hats," Houseal said.

When asked if he thought this was the beginning of a long political career for him, Houseal replied, "I feel like the political part of my life started long before this election when I consulted with government officials then. I think life itself is a political game and you have to do it the rest of your life...Now I'm doing it not for myself but for others."

Also, Houseal said he was not surprised about the outcome of any of the council and school board races.

"It was pretty much predicted, except for my race," he said. "I was the only one worried by winning. (Alphonso Roosevelt) Hall was a good candidate and made me worthy of the race."

"It was pretty rough," he added. "Other issues came up that shouldn't have been issues and we shouldn't have had to do that."

"Working together will be one of our (he and Hall's) first tasks," Houseal said.

"My main concern is making a relative contribution," Houseal said. "I said this 3 years ago when I ran for city council. It's more important than all the money in the world. I now have that opportunity and I'll do all I can to see that's it's done."

Valdosta Council To Change Rules At Thursday Meeting

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Though a vote will have to be taken Thursday, Valdosta City Council agreed to change the wordings of some of its "rules of council" at a work session Tuesday night.

The decision came after City Councilman-elect Joseph "Sonny" Vickers questioned several of the rules and asked City Manager Mike Cason to schedule it for discussion on the agenda for Thursday's council meeting.

The rules, which were adopted at city council's Feb. 21 meeting, governs policies and procedures for citizens and councilmen to follow. These include rules on "citizens to be heard," public hearing procedures and council member conduct.

One of the rules which affects the opportunity for citizens to speak before the city council states that "no single topic shall be allocated more than 5 minutes regardless of the number of speakers."

At the request of Vickers — and after much discussion — the council agreed to strike that portion of the procedures.

"Councilman May said nobody has taken more than five minutes at a meeting in seven years, then why fix something that isn't broken?" Vickers said.

Mayor Ernest Nijem agreed with Vickers and said the statement should be deleted in its entirety.

Two of the council members who helped design the rules aired their views on the 5-minute rule.

City Council Member Bette Bechtel said, "I don't think somebody will be gavelled down and I don't think that was the intention of the rule."

David Drumheller, also on the committee, said he thought some of the rules were "poorly worded."

"There will be no time clock, it's just a guideline," Drumheller said. "This just denotes discretion...They (the citizens) are not going to be stopwatched."

City Manager Mike Cason suggested that the council substitute the statement that all citizens "are requested to try to limit their talk to five minutes."

Also, Vickers questioned a rule under the procedures regarding council agendas that states "no items will be discussed or voted on that are not on the agenda unless they are of an emergency nature and have been previously discussed at a work session."

Vickers asked why could items not be at least discussed at the meetings.

Councilman Bubber Tillman suggested to delete the word "discuss," so council members could bring up an issue not on the agenda but still will have to wait until another council meeting to

call for a vote on it.

Another item of previous agenda procedure allowed council members to voice their opinions on any subject after the city managers report. There were questioned raised if this would be continued.

Council Member Jo Ann Hartman and Councilman Ashley Hill told Councilman Bubber Tillman, who initiated the rule, they thought council members' opportunity to be heard would be eliminated.

"We were talking about procedure," Tillman said. "I thought it was time-consuming to go around to each member... I thought the city manager could ask everyone at once."

Vickers also asked that other rules be explained and criticized the fact that the rules were not discussed at a public meeting before they were adopted.

"When we go discussing things in back rooms and motels that's where problems come about," Vickers said. "See what happens when we communicate."

Councilman-elect Bunnis "B" Williams reiterated earlier statements that he thought the new councilmen should have been included in designing the rules.

"I think the rules were passed in bad faith," Williams said. "It makes me wonder why, all of a sudden, we have to come up with rules and regulations."

Councilman-elect Willie Houseal asked why the rules of council were adopted at the Feb. 21 council meeting when they weren't scheduled on that meeting's agenda.

City Councilmen Jack May said the rules of council had been discussed at a work session the night before the meeting and therefore was allowed to be voted on by council at that meeting. May said he asked for a report on the rules from City Council Member Bette Bechtel and then the council voted to adopt the rules.

May, who pointed out that as mayor pro-tem he made the committee assignments but did not vote on the rules, said the rules have been standard procedures at of council meetings and councilmen conduct for years.

"It should have been called 'policies and procedures,'" May said. "But they have been adhered to in council meeting for years past."

Although the three councilmen-elect will not be sworn into office until Thursday, they were seated with the council at the work session.

At work sessions the city council does not vote on matters but only discusses them. The changes in the rules will be voted on at Thursday's scheduled council meeting.



City Council Roundup

New Councilmen Sworn In With Fanfare

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

More than 65 people attended the Valdosta City Council meeting Thursday, many there mainly to see three new city councilmen take their seats.

With much fanfare, Willie Houseal, of City District 1, Sunnis "B" Williams, of City District 2, and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers, City District 3, were sworn into office by State Judge Richard Cowart. Relatives of the three men stood by them as each took the oath of office.

This is the first time in Valdosta's history that three black councilmen had seats on the council.

The new council positions were the result of a settlement of a civil rights lawsuit between the City of Valdosta and the U.S. Justice Department.

The new councilmen have been elected for a special term of one year. In the 1986 general elections all city council seats will be up for grabs.

Until the next election the council will be made up of nine members.

After the 1986 elections there will be seven council members, excluding the mayor. Three city councilmen will be elected from predominately black city districts 1, 2, and 3 and three will be elected from predominately white city districts 4, 5, and 6. A council member and the mayor will be elected at large.

In other action at Thursday's meeting the council:

— Approved revisions to the "rules of city council." (See related story on Page 1.)

— Formed a committee to study funding of a Victim-Witness Assistance Program sponsored by the Lowndes District Attorney's office. (See related story on Page 1.)

— Received special election returns from City Attorney George Talley.

— Awarded the Employee of the Month Award to Staff Sergeant Remer Croft, of the Valdosta Police Department's detective division.

— Heard an announcement from Ms. Thelma J. Branham, of the Citizen's Awareness League, that they are inviting city council members, county commission members and school board members to a reception at Mathis City Auditorium on March 24 at 4 p.m.

— Heard a request by Paul Mitchell, of the Citizens Awareness League, that the council add manpower to the Valdosta Fire Department. Mitchell also requested that the Valdosta's Southside be considered for a new fire substation.

— Tabled without further advertisement until the April 11 meeting amendments to the Valdosta Zoning Ordinance regarding planned developments.

— Approved a request by Benny G. and Betty W. Cole to rezone from residential (R-6) to community commercial (C-C) property adjacent to property located at 400 E. Ann St.

— Approved a request by David and Brenda M. Brown to annex with a residential (R-15) zoning property located at No. 8 Ramblewood Circle.

— Denied a request by Jim Jamison to remove conditional zoning restrictions placed on property located at 2201 Fleming St. The council did not approve the planning commissions recommendation that the property be zoned office-professional (O-P). The property will revert to DR-10 zoning.

— Approved a request by Steve Lincoln to annex with residential (R-15) zoning property at the northwest corner

of Country Club Road and Jerry Jones Drive.

— Approved a request for the closure of an alley running from Force Street north and between North Lee Street and North Troup Street.

— Approved a quit-claim deed to the owner of property abutting the right of way at the northeast corner of Melody Lane.

— Voted to accept land at the Valdosta High School on a no-cost basis to construct a fire station for Valdosta's Northside.

— Tabled a request from the Valdosta Preservation Commission that the Historic District boundaries be redesignated. Councilman Willie Houseal requested that the Historic District's boundaries be extended south to include more of Valdosta's Southside. Houseal will meet with a representative of the commission and the matter will come before city council again at a later meeting.

— Accepted a bid for grit-chambers for the Withlacoochee Waste Water Treatment Plant.

— Approved the payment of \$7,553 for the emergency repair of a city-owned Cummings Diesel Engine.

— Approved the extension of a 12-inch water main on Country Club Drive, from Jerry Jones Drive to Greenmeadow Drive.

— Approved the extension of a 12-inch water main on Bay Tree Road, from Norman Drive to Sherwood Drive south.

— Approved an agreement with the Seaboard Coast Line Railway System for the relocation of signals at Ashley and Patterson streets.

— Instructed the city attorney to advertise that the city is not involved in solicitation of funds by telephone for a national policeman's organization.

How They Voted



BECHTEL DRUMHELLER HARTMAN HILL HOUSEAL MAY TILLMAN VICKERS WILLIAMS

	BECHTEL	DRUMHELLER	HARTMAN	HILL	HOUSEAL	MAY	TILLMAN	VICKERS	WILLIAMS
Motion To Table Victim-Witness Assistance Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rules Of City Council Revision	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Land For North Valdosta Fire Station	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Abstain	Yes	Yes

VSC Whithead Auditorium
Valdosta State College
Valdosta, Georgia

Saturday
March 10, 1984

**JESSE
JACKSON
FOR
PRESIDENT**



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Founder/Director
WILLIE HOUSEAL

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Saturday

March 10, 1984

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FOR
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505 Peachtree St., N.E./Atlanta, Ga. 30308/(404) 875-4208

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REV. W.H. ROSS, SR., COORDINATOR
WILBON PROPHET, CO-TREASURER
WILLIE RAYFORD, CO-TREASURER
JUANITA JACKSON PARKER, SECRETARY
WILLIE R. JONES
ARTHUR HART
HENRY L. SHERMAN
TRACY SMITH
LIZ GORDON
LEON GORDON
ROY VAN WILLIAMS
LYMAS JOHNSON, JR.
WILLIE HOUSEAL
RALPH COUNCIL
HENRY J. GILMORE, JR.
NAPOLEON BRYANT
LEROY BUTLER
CLARENCE J. WILLIAMS
FRANK MOODY

PROGRAMME

DEVOTIONAL SERVICE The Rev. John H. Giles

MUSICAL SELECTION

MESSAGE Brother Leroy Butler

WELCOME Ernest Nijem
Mayor, City of Valdosta

SPEAKER Representative Mary Young

REMARKS Mr. Henry Sherman
Local NAACP

MUSICAL SELECTION

REGISTERING AND VOTING - The Need .. Mr. Willie Houseal

REMARKS..... Mr. Frank Moody, President
NAACP of Cook County

MUSICAL SELECTION Valdosta High School Chorus
Mr. J. Herman Revels, Director

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER The Rev. W.H. Ross

KEYNOTE SPEAKER The Reverend Jesse Jackson
Democratic Presidential Candidate

CONTRIBUTIONS

THE BENEDICTION The Reverend H. Marion Steel



Rev. H.B. Johnson



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John White**

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Mary Young**



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Zeal - Valdosta
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Beulah First Baptist Choir - Quitman
Bethel Baptist Sr. Choir - Cook Co.
Piney Grove Sr. Choir - Cook Co.
Shady Grove Baptist Choir - Cook Co.
County Line Sr. Choir - Cook Co.
Ensembllettes - Fitzgerald
Morningstar Baptist Choir - Valdosta
Valdosta State Gospel Choir - Valdosta
Bethel C.M.E. Church Choir - Valdosta

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The State Senate

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

February 24, 1986

Honorable Willie Houseal
1023 Bunche Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

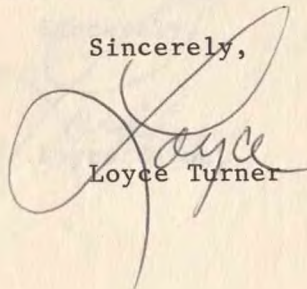
Dear Willie:

Congratulations on your reelection to the Valdosta City Council. I know that you were very gratified by the confidence shown in you by the voters.

I have enjoyed working with you in the past, and appreciate the fine job you have done for Valdosta. I look forward to working with you in the future as we strive to improve our city.

Call upon me whenever I can be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,



Loyce Turner

LT:lp



The State Senate
Atlanta

Loyce Turner
SENATOR
EIGHTH DISTRICT

608 HOWELLBROOK DRIVE
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31602

February 5, 1986

Honorable Willie Houseal
Councilman
1023 Bunche Drive
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

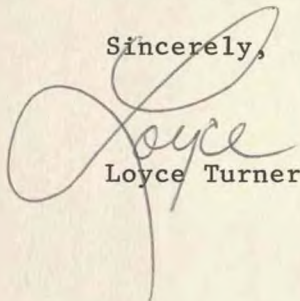
Dear Willie:

Enclosed is a copy of the picture which was made when the Valdosta delegation met with Governor Harris to present our application for Emergency Funds for the Southside Recreation Center.

It was my pleasure to be able to be with you and I appreciate your taking the time to come to Atlanta. I feel that it should be beneficial to our effort for the Governor to see so many interested parties willing to support the application.

Call upon me whenever I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Loyce Turner

LT:lp



Office of Lieutenant Governor
240 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

ZELL MILLER
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

February 17, 1986

Honorable Willie Houseal
City Councilman
P. O. Box 1125
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

Dear Willie:

I want to congratulate you upon your re-election to the Valdosta City Council and to wish you continued success in your endorsement term.

Please call on me whenever I can be of service to you or the people of Valdosta in any way open to me as Lieutenant Governor.

With warmest personal regards and every good wish.

At your service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Zell Miller".

Zell Miller

ZM/db



The State Senate
Atlanta

Loyce Turner
SENATOR
EIGHTH DISTRICT

608 HOWELLBROOK DRIVE
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31602

February 19, 1985

Mr. Willie Houseal
City Councilman-Elect
1023 Bunche Drive
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

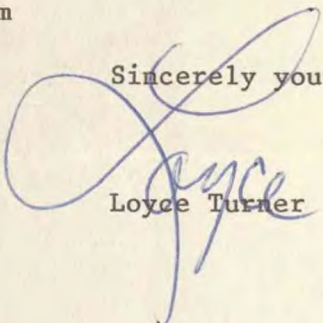
Dear Mr. Houseal:

My congratulations on your recent victory in the election for Valdosta City Council. I commend you for your willingness to serve our city and am certain you will do a very good job.

Please be assured that as your State Senator, I stand ready to assist you in any way as we work together to better our city. I encourage you to call on me at any time you may need my help.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,


Loyce Turner

LT:lp



Office of Lieutenant Governor
240 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

ZELL MILLER
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

February 14, 1985

Honorable Willie Houseal
City Councilman
P. O. Box 1125
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

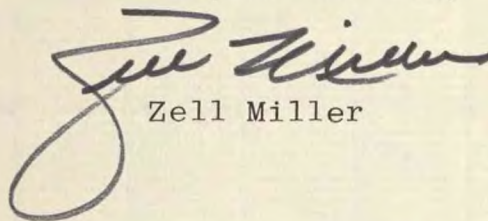
Dear Willie:

I want to congratulate you upon your election to the Valdosta City Council and to wish you every success during your term of office.

Please call on me whenever I can be of service to you or the people of Valdosta in any way, personally or officially.

With warmest personal regards and every good wish.

At your service,



Zell Miller

ZM/ak

CHARLES HATCHER
2D DISTRICT, GEORGIA

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VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31601
TELEPHONE: (912) 247-9705

February 19, 1985

Mr. Willie Houseal
Georgia Sheriffs Boys Ranch
Route 1
Hahira, Georgia 31732

Dear Mr. Houseal:

I just wanted to write you a short note to say congratulations on your recent election as a member of the Valdosta City Council.

I look forward to our working together for the benefit of our mutual constituency. As always, please do not hesitate to call on me if I may be of assistance to you.

Again, congratulations on being elected city councilman by the voters in Valdosta district 1.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,



CHARLES HATCHER
Member of Congress

CH:1j

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APC



VOTE Willie Houseal
City Council Post No.1