

Fifth Annual NCACC Youth Summit

Youth Summit Interview on Commissioner Joe Wiggins

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Jones County is a rural county. Most of Jones County's funding comes from agriculture. Almost all of the people that lived in Jones County back in the 60's and 70's farmed all their lives. Joe Wiggins is one of those people. I asked him a series of basic questions then revolved to the questions based on these facts.

When were you born?

J. Wiggins: In 1938, December fourteenth.

When were you first elected for commissioner?

J. Wiggins: I was elected as county commissioner for the first time in 1996.

How long have you been a commissioner? Will you run next time?

J. Wiggins: I have served on the board for sixteen years and I will run for re-election the next term.

What are your local priorities, or what county issues hold the most importance to you?

J. Wiggins: Hmm... well we are more involved with the funding of the schools. So that is probably our first priority.

Are there long term concerns about our county?

J. Wiggins: Yes. The schools keep demanding more funds, more funds that we don't have. Over two thirds of our funding comes from agriculture because we are a county based on agriculture. Most of it comes from tobacco and cotton. I have worked in the tobacco industry for over 15 years.

What influenced you to become a commissioner?

J. Wiggins: Well one of the commissioners had "retired", and he was big on keeping agriculture in the county. So in order to keep agriculture in the county I decided I would replace him as commissioner.

How has a farming background influenced the decisions you have made as a Jones County Commissioner?

J. Wiggins: Being a farmer has helped me to be thrifty and conservative, and to help farmers provide for the county

What jobs have you had in the past that have given you the experience to be a commissioner?

J. Wiggins: Well almost none. I worked in the tobacco market before that.

What education did you have to become a commissioner?

J. Wiggins: I had a high school diploma and I went through a short commissioner education class after that.

Being the commissioner of a rural county, where farming is the main industry, how do you maintain the balance between farming and growing industry?

J. Wiggins: Well in Jones County we have no other industry besides agriculture which is why funding is such a problem. We don't have the right incentives for big industries to come in and provide jobs for the county.

What are the hardest decisions you've made as a commissioner?

J. Wiggins: The hardest decisions were with dealing with the budget. Just trying to keep the budget on track.

For the final question I asked him;

How much longer do you plan on running and being a commissioner?

J. Wiggins: as long as the people keep re-electing me.

I learned a lot from Joe Wiggins and how they run our county. This interview allowed me to clearly see how dependent my county is on agriculture.

Special thanks To Joe Wiggins.