

NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

For more information, contact Bryan McCall
850-476-5035
bryan@duncanmccall.com

**Escambia County Commissioner Grover Robinson
Announces He Will Not Seek Reelection in 2018**

PENSACOLA, FLA (NOV 16, 2016) – Escambia County Commissioner Grover Robinson announced at a press conference today that he will not seek reelection in 2018. Commissioner Robinson made the announcement today in order to give anyone who might want to run for the office ample time to plan a campaign.

The text of his prepared remarks is included below:

Thank you for coming today, I have never had a personal press conference before, but that may be because I have tried to stay away from personal promotion. However, following many of the same paths as my father, I thought this was something personal that does impact District 4, and I needed to say it publicly as he did.

I have called you here today to announce publicly that I will not seek re-election for Escambia County Commission District 4 in 2018. While my family and I have known this for some time, it is appropriate now for me to share with the public, especially the citizens of District 4. I make this announcement today in hopes of providing sufficient time to everyone in the district so good people can plan now if they wish to run in two years.

While I greatly appreciate the support of District 4 citizens to allow me three terms to serve them, the seat is far more important than the person who temporarily occupies it. Therefore, now that the current election cycle is over, I would like as much time as possible for good individuals who would seek to serve this board and this district.

At the same time, I would like to take a moment to thank many of the people who have allowed me to serve and briefly review where we have come in this 10-year journey. First, it is most appropriate that I thank you, the press. While we no doubt have differed in our perspective, I appreciate the work you do to inform our citizens, and more importantly, I appreciate, that for the most part, you have quoted me accurately. I'd also like to thank Duncan McCall, who has supported me in each election and host us today.

Next and most importantly, I would like to thank the citizens of Escambia County, especially those

in District 4, who have voted between 63–80% in five separate elections to allow me to serve them. The statistics show they are the most active voters, the most participatory in their local governments, and they have always made sure that I was working to serve them.

Next, I would like to thank my good friends who have supported me each time I have run. They have helped raise money, placed yard signs, stood on street corners, and visited door to door, knocking for votes. Ten years ago, Rick Outzen referred to them as my Soccer Mom Army. They have been incredible friends that have supported Jill and me so much, and I could never have achieved anything without their support.

Next, I would like to thank the employees of Escambia County. They are some of the best people in this community who work every day to make our community better. They welcomed me as a part of the team, and they have honestly tried to make my thoughts and ideas work for our community. I will miss working with everyone but especially the senior staff and my only direct hires, Jack, Alison, and most of all, my assistant, Becky Azelton.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, my mother-in-law, Marie, my children, Grover V and Anna Lowrey, and my wife, Jill. Public service is so very tough on a family. However, they have handled these last 10 years so amazingly. They have provided me the ability to pursue a calling which I have enjoyed, and I cannot thank them enough for their love and support.

Now I would like to briefly review where we have been and what we have done as a county for 10 years and 12 before my tenure ends. First, we need to go back to 2006 and remember what Escambia County government was like. The County was just coming off the heels of the Sunshine Scandal that removed four commissioners. The County was seen statewide as a joke. The board and administration under George Touart were seen as one of the most political. The budget had escalated significantly. The local economy, which had roared in the wake of Ivan, was based on a house of cards that was about to fold in the Great Recession. Such was the atmosphere when I was elected by a near 2 to 1 margin over a three-term incumbent.

I still remember Banjanin's campaign literature which questioned how anyone could allow a 36-year-old beginner to run a \$452 million budget. Clearly, you could not because we began cutting immediately both from a fall in property values but also the single largest millage reduction in Escambia County history. This moved the budget to \$363 million. Even today, 10 years later, the budget is \$434 million — still below that 2006 amount. Bringing a fiscal discipline to the county will always be one of my biggest accomplishments while serving.

In that first term, we also made considerable leaps in environmental quality. First, we moved the sewer plant with a plan I supported to give county cash and assist the city in financing their contribution. Next, we found a way to start curbside recycling, both in the county and city, by eliminating tipping fees on recyclables. Next, another initiative of mine was to contract with Gulf Power to use methane from the landfill to power homes and generate about \$1 million for the county in new revenue.

We also made strides in Animal Services by transitioning to a no-kill shelter with a spay and neuter program. We also started an employee clinic to both provide benefits to employees and to aid in curbing insurance cost to the taxpayer. Both of these were initiatives which I championed

during that first term.

While we were not able to do much during the Great Recession to improve the economy, my second term did see a number of economic development successes, including helping GE or others in Ellyson, such as Pall Corporation, expand jobs in District 4. After that was the major work to negotiate one of the single largest expansions in Escambia County in 40 years at Navy Federal which also provide a win for our 4-H services. Finally, the recent contribution and financing for the city to bring in VT-MAE at the airport.

If we are talking economic success in District 4, we have to include tourism. Nearly 70% of the TDT is collected in District 4. Over 10 years, we have doubled our collections and seen visitation to our community nearly double as well, which has allowed us to export the burden of county taxes. This is part of the reason I championed a controversial plan to allow tourism to stand alone from the Chamber of Commerce. While now it is so easy to see that success, it was not clear when the BCC made that move.

Another accomplishment, especially for city residents who make up the majority of District 4, is that we have been able to combine two services, ECAT and libraries, under county leadership. Both now operate more effectively and are not a double taxation burden on city residents.

While all of these things will be accomplishments I remember, probably the single thing that will stick with me during my tenure as Commissioner is the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and the related fines that came from it. While I will certainly always remember the never ending effort to battle that four-month environmental catastrophe, the subsequent work to secure legislation that would ensure over \$70 million dollars would come back to support our community for its losses was truly my greatest accomplishment while serving as Commissioner. The Florida response to the BP claims is so different than any other state, and my fingerprints are all over that decision.

Being able to be such an integral part of federal legislation and being able to represent Escambia County in a statewide position as President of the Florida Association of Counties will always be highlights of my service. However, more importantly, I believe they have helped the current and future boards of this county to be seen, not as a joke like 10 years ago, but as a leader in Florida local government. Those things don't happen overnight, and they don't happen accidentally. I am proud of this legacy I hope to leave, and I look forward to building upon it these final two years of my term.

###