



SC School Improvement Council

"Civic Engagement in Public Education"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Blassingame, Smith named to SC-SIC Board of Trustees

COLUMBIA – Rev. James B. Blassingame of Sumter and Thessa G. Smith of Allendale have recently been named to the SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees, Board Chair Ellen M. Still has announced.

"These two individuals demonstrate a great deal of passion for and understanding of public education and its significant impact on the future economic health of our state," said Ms. Still. "We are very fortunate to have them and their expertise on our Board, and we look forward to partnering with them in the coming years as we help the SC School Improvement Council to provide vital services to our schools, our children and our communities."

Ms. Smith was appointed to fill an unexpired term on the SC-SIC Board, and Rev. Blassingame was elected to a full three-year term representing their respective regions of the state. The Board is composed of 21 members from all corners of South Carolina and acts in an advisory capacity to the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC), which serves nearly 15,000 members of local School Improvement Councils in the state's 1,100-plus K-12 public schools.

Rev. Blassingame, a Seneca native, has served as Pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Sumter since 1984. A substitute elementary teacher in the Sumter School District, he also currently serves as President of the Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina, and First Assistant Secretary of the National Baptist Convention USA, Secretary of the Morris College Board of Trustees, Immediate Past Moderator of the Sumter Baptist Missionary and Educational Association, and Field Education Supervisor for Princeton (NJ) Theological Seminary.

A US Army veteran and life member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Rev. Blassingame has served as a member of the School Improvement Councils of Lemira Elementary and Chestnut Oaks Middle schools in Sumter. He also serves on the Sumter School District Community Advisory Board, the Bank of Clarendon Sumter Advisory Board, the board of Sumter Senior Services, Inc., the Benedict College Board of Trustees, and as a representative on the Third Judicial Circuit Citizens Committee on Judicial Qualifications.

Rev. Blassingame holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Morris College and the bachelor of Divinity degree from the Morris School of Religion. He was awarded the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Morris College in 2000, and received the Mamie L. Duckett Founder's Day Award from Benedict College in 2006.

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Ms. Smith has served as County Administrator for Allendale County since 2012, having previously served as Assistant County Manager and Zoning Administrator for Greenwood County beginning in 1999. She also is currently an Adjunct Professor of human resource management, supervision, organizational behavior, and business ethics and strategy with Southern Wesleyan University. She previously held several management and coordinator positions with GLEAMNS Human Resources, Inc., in Greenwood, as well as those of Procurement Manager for Flexible Technologies in Abbeville, and Senior Electronics Buyer with FL Aerospace, Grimes Division, in Greenwood.

Pastor of Mt. Carmel United Methodist Church in Ninety Six, Ms. Smith is a past PTSO President and School Improvement Council member for Greenwood High School, and previously served on the SC-SIC Board of Trustees from 2002 to 2008. She is Immediate Past President of the South Carolina Personnel Association, and serves on the boards of the South Carolina City and County Managers Association, Southern Carolina Alliance, The Palmetto Bank, and as an alternate board member for Three Rivers Solid Waste Authority. A Client Advocator for Habitat for Humanity, Ms. Smith is also a past Board Chair for Greenwood County First Steps and past Commissioner for the GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission, and is a former member of the SC Department of Social Services Citizen Review Board and the Board of Visitors for Piedmont Technical College.

Ms. Smith holds the Master of Science degree in Management from Southern Wesleyan University, the Master of Divinity degree from Erskine Theological Seminary, the Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Limestone College, and an Early Childhood Certificate from Piedmont Technical College.

Located at the University of South Carolina's College of Education, the SC School Improvement Council was established in state law 35 years ago to provide the member training, technical assistance, statutory accountability, and operational resources vital to the continued success of the community-based School Improvement Councils in each of the state's K-12 public schools.

Additional information on the SC School Improvement Council and its services can be found online at <http://sic.sc.gov>.