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## STATEMENT ON THE CONFIRMATION OF RONNIE FEW

Mayor Bob Young, Augusta, Georgia

Chairman Brazil. Committee Members. It is a pleasure for me to share with you my support of Ronnie Few to be the fire chief for the District of Columbia.

I have been the mayor of the consolidated government of Augusta-Richmond County since January 4, 1999. Prior to that, I was the senior news anchor for WJBF-TV in Augusta. In one form or fashion, I have observed Chief Few's performance since the day he arrived in Augusta.

Chief Few was brought in to be the first chief of the consolidated Augusta-Richmond County Fire Department. Chief Few took responsibility for the implementation phase of joining the city of Augusta and Richmond County's Fire Departments into one cohesive unit. Ronnie Few was faced with the tough issues of bringing two, separate fire departments together into one. The problems included merging people, equipment and philosophies. Chief Few rose to the occasion and the citizens substantiated his success. Before Chief Few's arrival, we often received citizen complaints regarding our department. With Chief Few at the helm citizen complaints became virtually non-existent.

What has struck me most about Ronnie is his enthusiasm for the job. Yes, he had detractors; agents of the status quo always put up a good fight. But, Chief Few never lost sight of his mission and never allowed himself to be distracted.

Ronnie Few was an agent of change for Augusta, and there is no doubt he has made significant changes in the Augusta-Richmond County Fire Department.

I am a strong supporter of continuing education for employees. I was pleased to learn when I came into office that the chief had implemented a comprehensive training program for the department's officers. He also toughened up the physical standards and brought the first female firefighters on board. I am told that when Chief Few came on board, he found a fireman allergic to smoke and another afraid of heights. Those kinds of hirings are now a thing of the past. The chief also delegated authority, to promote decision-making at lower levels of command.

Chief Few also began a program to upgrade the rolling stock, along with our firefighting equipment. Through the chief's efforts, we were able to save enough money on the purchase of five pumper trucks to afford a sixth vehicle. He also established mobile command posts to better facilitate decision-making on the scene.

Among the new concepts the chief brought to Augusta was first responder training for all of our firemen. He was even able to convince the commission to authorize pay premiums for firemen who completed the training for emergency medical technician. We have also assumed the extrication functions previously handled by the contract ambulance service.

With the future of that private ambulance service in question, Chief Few had already begun the initial steps toward integrating emergency medical services with the fire department as a city function.

Chief Few recognizes that community service is important to government agencies. He established the R-U-OK program that checks on seniors and shut-ins on a regular basis. He established the safe house to give temporary shelter to family made homeless by fire. He served as District Chairman for the Georgia-Carolina Council of the Boy Scouts of America, plus he was a strong supporter of the annual Jerry Lewis Telethon for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Likewise, the chief encouraged his officers to become involved in civic organizations and support community projects.

When Chief Few left Augusta to take the job in the District, he had completed for us one of his most important projects. That is, the \$24 million dollar fire station relocation and upgrade program, which the voters overwhelmingly approved as part of our Special Local Option Sales Tax referendum last week. This project is critical to the health and safety of our citizens in the fastest growing areas of our community. The successful completion will also lead to better fire insurance rates for our property owners. Although Chief Few departed Augusta before the voters spoke, he handed over to us a blue print for the future of our fire department.

Under our government structure, the fire chief reports to the city administrator. The relationship I had with Chief Few was from a policy development aspect, as well as that of citizen, consumer and friend.

Ronnie has always impressed me with his enthusiasm for the job, his desire to get the job done right the first time, and his concern for his employees. He made significant changes in our fire department. The mayor and city commission are committed to seeing that the changes are stepping-stones to an even greater department under our next chief.

Ronnie Few brought about major improvement within the Augusta-Richmond County Fire Department. Often times, leaders must effect change to manage a department to its highest level. Change is often met with resistance and always with the burden of having to make hard decisions. Chief Few rose to the occasion and in some cases people forced to confront change became angry. His detractors used general disagreements, race, and

other non-issues in attempts to discredit the chief. In fact the Grand Jury Investigation serves as a prime example.

As the Chief of Augusta-Richmond County Fire Department, Ronnie Few's record speaks for itself.

Some might argue that the District fire department is too large for Chief Few to handle. I say to them, if you can handle the Augusta-Richmond County Fire Department, you can handle anything.

I thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you. I am sorry that a mix-up in communications made it impossible for me to be with you personally today. I will certainly make myself available for questioning as appropriate.

Thank you and God Bless.