



## **Statement of the Chairman**

**February 9, 2009**

As Chairman I am reminded daily, that the principles of the Republican Party must stand on the foundation of integrity, honesty and good character.

The last few weeks have provided us the opportunity to view the nature and character of an individual. This man chose himself to be the highest ranking official in the Tennessee House. We are of course speaking of Kent Williams.

Within our party we have had a frank conversation over the last 28 days deliberating how to view the actions of Rep. Kent Williams.

The single goal of this committee since I was elected to serve as Chairman in August of 2007 has been to gain the majority in the Tennessee General Assembly. All of our efforts, all staffing, all recruitment, all activities were done with this goal in mind.

All members of the Tennessee State Committee, all members of the Republican Legislative leadership, all members of the legislative body and all supporters have believed this was the only reasonable goal.

We were working to Take the Hill.

On November 4, the Tennessee Republican Party in partnership with the Republican Caucuses elected 14 new Republican members to achieve of a Republican Majority in both legislative chambers for the first time in recent history.

Immediately following these victories, our Caucus Leadership and Bylaws Subcommittee had several conversations and meetings. We all wanted to confirm the provisions that have existed in the TRP Bylaws that address the support for the Republican Caucus nominees for Speaker and Speaker Pro Tempore.

These discussions and meetings were very clear in purpose and occurred with an uncontested outcome: The Tennessee Republican Party State Executive Committee and the Republican Caucus were unified in having the nominees for these two leadership positions be fully supported and elected.

The provisions in the governing documents of our Party were to be used in this process to encourage this agreed outcome.

In November, candidates for the positions of Speaker and Speaker Pro Tempore were made known by the House Caucus. Kent Williams had made no effort and expressed no interest in running as a candidate in the Caucus elections for either position. Jason Mumpower and Steve McDaniel were elected to serve as the Republican Caucus nominees to represent the Republican Majority.

As Background I would like to lay out some of the facts leading up to the House's leadership votes.

While attending the hearings for Constitutional Officer candidates at Legislative Plaza, I introduced myself to Rep. Williams on December 15, 2008 in the cafeteria.

During our brief conversation, Rep. Williams told me of his plans to vote for both Republican Caucus nominees (by name) but spoke of a possible vote for a Democrat-incumbent for one of the Constitutional Officers. I asked him to speak with his Caucus leadership on the matter. I communicated this directly to Leader Jason Mumpower and made no demands of Mr. Williams.

On January 13, 2009, there was still no indication from Kent Williams that both of his votes for leadership would be cast for anyone other than the Republican Caucus nominees. Evidence that Rep. Williams continued to support his Republican colleagues included a personal phone call received from a current member of the Republican U.S. Congressional delegation to confirm his support of the caucus nominees.

Mr. Williams twice caucused with the other 49 Republican members of the House, once immediately prior to the opening session and then only minutes before the nominations for both leadership positions. In none of these instances did Williams offer any indication as to his orchestrated plans. Instead he offered constant reassurances to other members that he would vote for the nominees.

In one of these meetings, Kent Williams joined Representatives Jason Mumpower, Glen Casada and Charles Sargent in prayer less than 30 minutes prior to his betrayal.

Representative Kent Williams was elected Speaker of the Tennessee House by the votes of 49 Democrats and his own vote. Rep. Kent Williams, then, cast his vote for Democrat Rep. Lois DeBerry to work with him as Speaker Pro Tempore rather than for the Republican Caucus nominee. Both of these votes were in complete contradiction to countless statements, promises and pledges he had made to support the Republican Caucus nominees.

After the vote I received 30 written challenges questioning the Bona Fide status as a Republican of Kent Williams as provided in the Bylaws of our Party.

Two meetings were held by telephone with the State Committee members as well numerous meetings with elected Republican officials.

During this period of time since January 13, the State Committee has passed overwhelmingly the resolution specifically calling on me to act as Chairman on the challenges and the actions of Kent Williams.

I have personally corresponded with each member of the Republican House Caucus asking for information showing Kent Williams to be a supporter of the Tennessee Republican Party, the Republican House Caucus or an individual candidate for office during his 2-year tenure.

Of 6 emails received and a very few phone messages, no evidence of Rep. Kent Williams has been submitted to contradict the 30 written challenges to his party status.

We have watched during the last 28 days to see if Kent Williams would assign the 13 Committee Chairmanships to the Republican Majority. He did not.

We watched to see how Rep. Williams would assign office space and staff to the Republican Majority. He has crammed 49 of his colleagues in 46 offices.

We have watched Rep. Williams maintain the same wage practices with Democrat staff earning more than the Republican staff, even as democrat staffers are assigned to fewer representatives.

We have learned that Mr. Williams has met with Governor Bredesen as the "Republican Representative" on the critical issue of the budget. Mr. Williams has withheld all of this information from the Republican Caucus encumbering their policy statements and decisions.

I have been repeatedly informed that Rep. Williams refuses to caucus with the Republicans.

During last week, the topic of Mr. Williams' party affiliation was discussed with him by two colleagues. To one, he indicated he might "leave the party." To the other colleague, he stated his refusal to leave if asked.

Today, I am responding to Kent Williams untrustworthy behavior and his demonstration to continue to undercut his Republican colleagues. He is cultivating an environment of distrust proving that his only allegiance is to himself.

The principles of the Republican Party must stand on the foundation of integrity, honesty and character. Our deliberations reveal that the choices of Kent Williams are not partisan or bi-partisan. His choices appear to be only self-serving and that is wrong.

Without question, it would be easier and more politically expedient for the Party to ignore the actions of Rep. Kent Williams.

The credibility of this Party, our principles and our great people are not to be jeopardized, compromised or bargained away for personal gain. Tennesseans deserve leaders who treat their public service as a trust, not a personal possession.

As Chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party, I regret the necessary response. I will honor and enforce the resolution passed by the State Committee on February 2, 2009 as supported by the Tennessee Code

Annotated, and no longer recognize Rep. Kent Williams as a Republican in good standing in the state of Tennessee.