

BLACK INK



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Drakeford and Thorpe announce re-election bids

Politicians stress student vote

RAMONA BROWN
Features Editor

Carrboro mayor Robert Drakeford and Chapel Hill town councilman Bill Thorpe recently announced that they would seek re-election in the Chapel Hill and Carrboro elections on Nov. 3. If elected, Drakeford would serve his third term.

Drakeford and Thorpe spoke Sept. 13 before approximately 50 members of the Black Student Movement at a general body meeting where they stressed the importance of the black student vote in the upcoming elections.

"The issue that is going to affect students is the possible increase in the bus pass," Drakeford said.

He also said there have been some statements that the \$65 bus pass could possibly be raised to \$300 in January.

"There are opposing forces that if elected would raise the price of the pass and there will be a possible non-existent bus system," Drakeford said.

Most people who utilize the transit system regularly are students, senior citizens, particularly blacks.

"There are people who want to destroy the bus system and if they get elected you will be walking the UNC campus and the town of Chapel Hill", Bill Thorpe.

The black vote will also be important to the apartment dwellers, they said.

"Carrboro is 80 percent students and faculty and 80 percent of the property is rental property," Drakeford said.

He also said that the apartment dweller, particularly students, has the right to participate in the decision-making processes for the town because they are paying a lot of the

bills.

Both politicians said that the bus pass increase would be the major concern for students and by voting that students can address this issue in the election.

Drakeford said the South Orange Black Caucus and the BSM should join in unity to work towards one common goal — the interest of blacks.

"It should not be the South Orange Black Caucus and the Black Student Movement working on different parts of town on different areas," he said.

The black vote could be very important in retaining black representatives.

"It's going to be tough, there are people who don't want me in the community politics because I'm outspoken," Thorpe said.

Presently, there aren't any blacks on any of the city commissions, Thorpe said.

"Only since I've served as mayor have blacks held more positions in the town government, town management and the police enforcement," Drakeford said.

There is need for black unification in order to keep black representation and to maintain the present accomplishments.

"There are elements of the white community encouraging community blacks to vote against me," Thorpe said.

The black vote will become important in the election and blacks are strongly encouraged to register; the student vote will be important in many of the issues, Thorpe said.

"There is a coalition to bring Carrboro back to the old status—underdeveloped," Drakeford said.

Drakeford said he did not know for sure who made up this coalition, but whoever comprises the group are determined to defeat him in the upcoming election.



Thorpe

Photos by
Sonja Payton

Drakeford

Mayor runs for last time

LAWRENCE TURNER
Managing Editor

"This will be my last time running for mayor," Robert Drakeford, Carrboro mayor, said Sept. 9 in an interview in his office at the Carrboro Town Hall.

The first black mayor in the town's history, Drakeford is running for his third term. The town election will be Nov. 3.

"I feel eight years is long enough to serve (in city government if re-elected). It's time somebody new came in," he said.

Drakeford began his political career as a Carrboro alderman in 1975. Two years later, he was elected as mayor and was re-elected the following term.

He said his political objectives include bringing "more commercial and industrial development to the town — to make sure we (Carrboro) are efficiently run as possible, (and) to reduce taxes, if possible."

When asked about political aspirations beyond that of mayor, Drakeford only closed his eyes and shook his head. "It (working in city government) burns you out," he said.

As president of Small Cities Communications of Hillsborough, Drakeford said the rest of his time is spent working there. He said the corporation offers cable television to small towns throughout the Southeast.

The soft-spoken, New York City native served as a city planner, working in North Carolina state government in Raleigh before coming to Carrboro.

He said he came to Carrboro, in part, because the Board of Aldermen refused to

initiate a bus transit system there.

After joining the board, Drakeford said his work was "instrumental" in starting a bus system. It was in operation his second year as alderman, he said.

"Transportation has been the dominant issue in this town for the last six years, getting it and keeping it," he said.

Drakeford, a heavy man about 5'9", said, "It was a battle trying to get the bus system in."

The battle was won, however. There is now bus service between the UNC-CH campus and Carrboro.

Drakeford also has rallied for additional federal and state funds for the town, he said. More than \$2 million has been raised in the past four years, he said.

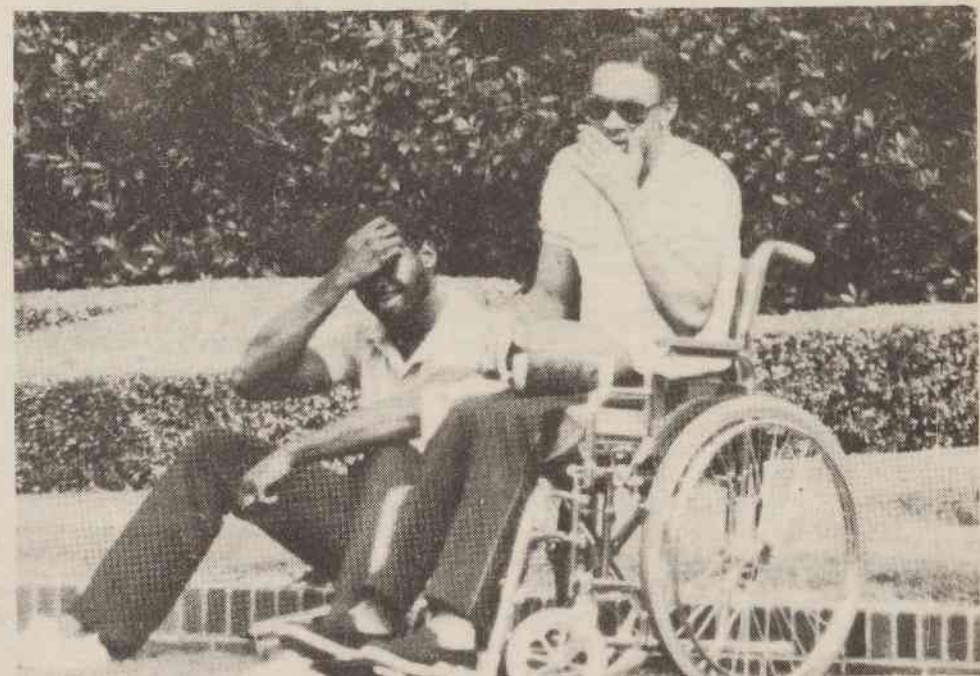
He was also instrumental in replacing a fire station which wasn't adequate, Drakeford said, and the building of a 55-acre park which is near completion.

The park is "the largest park in central North Carolina," he said. It will include tennis courts, basketball courts, jogging and hiking trails, a man-made lake, paddle boats and recreation areas. "A little something for everyone, in other words," Drakeford said.

During his spare time, the 36-year old Drakeford also plays tennis and basketball. "That's about all I have time to do if I'm lucky," he said.

The father of two says that young blacks interested in politics should work in a political campaign and run for an office.

"The only way to affectingly change the (political) process is to stop screaming from the outside and get involved."



Steve Streater (in the wheelchair) and Tyress Bratton await for tailback Kelvin Bryant to bring them another football after scoring during the season opener football game with East Carolina University.
Staff Photo