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**FLOWERS SAID SMITH VOTE AGAINST TEACHERS ETHICS CODE COULD
PUT CHILDREN AT RISK AND SHOWS NEED FOR “NEW LEADERSHIP”**

Dothan – Dothan businessman George Flowers, a potential candidate for the Senate District 29 seat currently held by Harri Anne Smith (R – Slocomb), on Wednesday said a controversial vote cast by the incumbent this week demonstrates the need for new leadership in the area, especially following the conviction of a Dothan school principal for questionable acts involving students.

Flowers referenced Smith’s decision to join Senate Democrats in voting to oppose an ethics code for teachers and education personnel that was passed last year by the State School Board. The ethics code, among other things, would have prohibited teachers from committing or soliciting sex acts with students, forbid the use of illegal drugs and denied the use of inappropriate language, alcohol or tobacco while in a professional role.

Smith was one of only two Republicans to join Senate Democrats in opposing the ethics measure, which school board members had designed, in part, to hasten the firing of educators convicted of crimes of moral turpitude. [*Roll Call Vote 4 on SJR9*]

“The fact that one of the first votes Harri Anne Smith cast this session was against ethics reform is disappointing, but the fact that it could also put our schoolchildren at potential risk is downright dangerous,” Flowers said.

The need for the ethics code arose following the conviction of a Washington County teacher who continued to draw her full salary and benefits even after being convicted and sentenced to a 10-year prison term for using a cell phone and computer to entice a 14-year-old boy for sex. She still faces charges of rape and sodomy.

A Houston County high school principal, Andrew Sewell, also pled guilty last year to three counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor, including “allegations he had sex with a 17-year-old student of Dothan High and supplied alcohol on two occasions to the same student,” according to the Dothan Eagle.

“When teachers engage in bad behavior halfway across the state, it is easier for Harri Anne to turn a blind eye and try to justify her vote,” Flowers said. “But she should be ashamed when such a serious incident occurred right in her backyard. Make no mistake, I will keep this vote in mind while making my decision about the Senate District 29 race, and should I decide to enter, you have my pledge that I will support a strict code of ethics for teachers.”

Flowers previously announced the formation of his principal campaign committee, which is the first step towards declaring a candidacy. He also noted that each member of his committee is a former supporter and contributor of Harri Anne Smith.