

Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Ray Sansom today, January 5, 2009, delivered this statement to the House, meeting in a special budget session:

" Members, before we get started I'd like to make a brief, personal announcement.

Together with my family, I have decided to resign from my position as a vice president at Northwest Florida State College.

This has not been an easy decision for me to make. I accepted my position at the college with pure intentions and for good reasons. I have long had a passion for education, and I have spent decades working to expand the opportunities available to the people of northwest Florida. Given my interests and my professional experience, serving at the college was a natural next step, and it took me back to an institution that I love and without which I could not have gotten a college degree. God willing, I had hoped to still be working at the college long after my service in elected office was over.

Unfortunately, some have disagreed with my decision to work at the college. While I do not question their motives, I strongly object to their conclusions. In all my years in public service, I have sought to act in a manner worthy of the trust that the people have placed in me.

When I became Speaker of the House, I made a commitment to you and to the people of Florida that I would put this office and this institution above any personal interests of my own. I will not, and cannot, allow any controversy over my position at the college to divert our focus from serving the needs of the people we represent.

In the weeks since I became Speaker, many of you-Republicans and Democrats alike-have offered my family and me words of support and encouragement, and we sincerely thank you for that.

I appreciate your indulgence in allowing me to make these personal remarks. Now let's get down to the business of this special session."