

Integrity in action

February 15, 2009

[Harris](#) offered to waive his performance incentive pay for 2008—estimated at \$167,835—because the current economic downturn has hurt the [Teacher Retirement System's](#) pension fund and its participants.

According to a TRS news release, the system's pension fund dropped 27 percent in market value in 2008. Bad as that sounds, it contrasts nicely with the global equity markets' 40-percent tumble during the same period.

Sharing the pain

“We are all suffering during this virtually unprecedented period,” Harris noted in the TRS news release. “The value of people’s investments has decreased, and many are out of work or concerned about their jobs. As chief investment officer of the fund, it seems to me that I should also feel the effects of this difficult time—just like many of our members.”

Harris' leadership made a dramatic impact on TRS trustees, who accepted his offer to forgo '08 incentive pay. But they also voted to defer all remaining performance pay in the system's investment division until the fund shows positive returns for a full year.

“We place great value on the skills, expertise and performance of our staff, and we appreciate how they have helped us avoid bigger losses during the current economic downturn,” TRS Board Chairman Linus Wright said. “However, the board agreed with Harris that deferring performance payments at this time was the responsible thing to do

“My fellow trustees and I admire and respect the selflessness shown by Britt and the entire investment staff. It only reinforces what we have known all along—the professional strength and character of the TRS team.”

Imagine the impact ...

Just think how much better our cities, state and nation—not to mention the world—would be if they were led by people like Britt Harris. What if such integrity were the norm?

Harris is the kind of public leader who makes you proud to be a Baptist. He's a member of First Baptist Church in Austin and recently presented a paper, "Bible and Budgets: Recovering a Biblical Worldview," at the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission's annual conference.

Harris comes by his integrity quite naturally. His father was Tom Harris, former pastor at First Baptist Church in Harlingen and Casa View Baptist Church in Dallas and associate pastor at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

Imagine the evangelistic and societal impact Christians would have on the world if we all behaved like Britt Harris.