

**NAME:** Richard Smith  
**PARTY:** Democratic  
**SEEKING:** Senate District 45

**Why are you seeking your office?**

Practically my whole life I've wanted to run for office. People still remember me as the kid that wanted to run for president. I ran as an Independent candidate for a State House seat in 2018 because I saw and felt the divisiveness in the political realm and tried to avoid it by focusing on policy and not on party. I felt I had a unique ability to have political conversations with both liberals and conservatives without the conversation ending in disgust of one another. I hope to bring that same spirit to this run for State Senate.

**What do you expect to accomplish if elected?**

Policy goals I plan to get accomplished during my two year term include: Implementation of ranked-choice voting statewide, legalization of marijuana, fixing the broken process for Independent political candidates, abolishing the death penalty, phasing out private state prisons, implementing term limits, banning "virginity" testing, and legalizing gambling. I believe these are things I can accomplish with bipartisan support because most have financial benefits to either local areas, the state as a whole, or both.

**What distinguishes your candidacy?**

I believe running for a State House seat in 2018 as an Independent candidate gives me a unique and necessary perspective on the political process. I also believe my campaign has realistic goals for a two year term. These are goals that aren't dependent on one party or another having complete control of the political process. These are bipartisan goals that don't make supporters from either party feel like they're giving up their moral high ground. I believe all of these points make my campaign unique instead of more of the same bickering that gets nothing done.

**Pick any one issue. Expand on how you will address it.**

Legalizing marijuana is not a perfect policy. There will be an increase in driving while high, for example, but there are similar issues with alcohol. We don't make possession of alcohol illegal, or even getting drunk. Operating a vehicle is one of the sensible lines drawn and it's hypocritical for marijuana to not be treated the same way. Benefits include decreasing the prison population, which saves taxpayers' money, and generating local and state revenue. Any locality that doesn't opt-out will get a portion of revenue generated, which will help solidify support from both parties.

**Suggest ways to jump start the economy after COVID-19.**

Increase revenue statewide through a number of routes. My plan to legalize marijuana includes sending revenue generated to local governments that don't opt-out and generating state revenue while creating jobs and decreasing the prison population. Implementing ranked-choice voting saves local governments money by eliminating run-off elections. Legalizing gambling is also an obvious way to generate revenue. Aside from moral issues, eliminating the state death penalty, which is more expensive than a life sentence, allows for state funds/resources to be spent elsewhere.

**Please give a 100 word summary on your background.**

Born in Atlanta and raised in Gwinnett, including attending Kanoheda Elementary, Sweetwater Middle and Berkmar High School. I studied Political Science at Augusta State University and Georgia State University. Married to Kristin Smith, a nurse, in September 2018 and raising a son, Jackson, born October 2019. Currently a Barista at Starbucks with 5 years of experience. My participation in organizations includes SGA Senator at Augusta State University, sole Georgia representative for the Henry Clay Center for Statesmanship Student Congress (Summer 2010), and Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy graduate (2017).