



Embargoed to 10:00am
Oct. 11, 2017

Why I am Running for Governor

“We need big change and real reform...right NOW”

In 1756, my family came from Ireland to the Upcountry of South Carolina - a land that they were told had more beauty and potential than any of the other colonies in the newly found land that was known as America.

For nine generations, my family has lived and worked in our state. They were farmers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, preachers and politicians – and even three governors.

They all shared a common dream -- to make South Carolina a better place for their family and our state’s people.

As I now think about my forefathers, I know how ashamed they would be of some so-called leaders in our state today.

There are many good and decent people in the legislature and state government – in both parties - but too many of our statehouse politicians have been infected with the contagious disease of corruption.

Its symptoms have not just contaminated the halls of our state house but have spread though out our state, and stopped us from becoming the state that we were meant to be.

This systemic corruption has prevented us from getting what we want and deserve – world class schools for our kids and grandkids, honest utility rates, safe and decent roads, lower taxes for the middle class and small business and a secure pension for our teachers and state employees.

Between the continued corruption scandal in the statehouse and the utility companies’ nuclear debacle - that you, your kids, and your grandkids will be paying for until 2087 – it is no wonder that people have less faith in their elected officials today than they have in the last 50 years.

It doesn’t have to be this way. We can do better. We deserve better.

We need big change and real reform - right now.

No more empty promises. No more back room deals. No more special privileges for career politicians. No more dark money and legalized bribery for the political class – just real results that make life better for you and your kids.

For the last 30 years, I have worked with people in communities all over this state and I know we are an amazing state with enormous potential. I know what we can do.

- With a group of business and religious leaders, we created the *Palmetto Project* to develop new and innovative ideas and projects to improve our state. It was named as the best non-profit group in the state by the United Way.
- With our state's educators and a global technology venture, we created *One Laptop Per Child South Carolina* to bring educational laptops to some of the worst schools in the state. Thousands of children experienced a new joy of learning.
- With doctors and pharmacists, we started a project that became *Wellvista* that provides free prescription drugs and health care to those who can't afford it. It has provided hope and wellness for hundreds of thousands of South Carolinians.
- With global technology companies and our state's educators we created *World Class Scholars*, a real time online educational and cultural exchange linking our state's students with kids around the world. Today, our students are learning about - and with - their peers in over 25 countries. There is nothing like it in any other state.

All of these have been about bringing together innovative ideas and committed people to produce actual results that made our state better.

It's not our state that is broken and corrupt but our politics.

I have seen the heart and soul of the people of our state and they are good and decent people with a commitment to work for something better for our state.

And, since I was a pudgy, nine-year-old boy handing out leaflets on the street corner for John Kennedy, I have been involved with politics.

I have seen honorable elected officials committed to doing the right thing for our state – even when it was hard and unpopular. And, I have seen politicians that only looked out for themselves and viewed public service as simply an opportunity for personal profit.

It is because of this lifetime commitment and love for our state - and a burning passion to rid our statehouse of this disease of corruption - that today I am announcing my candidacy for Governor of the State of South Carolina.

We need new ideas and innovative thinking from new leaders who can see beyond the statehouse dome and understand the larger world we are living in today.

And we need new people in all types of leadership roles.

For too long the good old boys have shut out, pushed out, and ignored so many good and committed people – especially women, young people, minorities and folks who live in rural areas or have different sexual preferences.

Those days need to come to an end - now.

We have done some wonderful things in this state – but our triumphs have been all tangled up with our tragedies. We all need to be open and honest with ourselves about our short comings and failures.

Too often we are 50th in those things where we should be first – and first in those things where we should be 50th.

Most of all, we must deal constructively and honestly with the issues of race – the ‘original sin’ of our state and nation that is still holding us all back today.

Throughout our state’s history, on most any issue, when race was an issue, it was the issue.

Imagine what we could achieve if we come together in open dialogue and work to get beyond this.

I am not offering easy answers or quick fixes. We have much hard work to do with tough and difficult choices, but we can solve our states’ problems – we really can.

As John Kennedy said, “Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants.”

I believe this – and the question for us as South Carolinians today is this – how big do we want to be?

Do we want to nibble around the edges of our problems? Do we want to kick the can down the road? Do we want to just take baby steps in the right direction?

I believe we need and want big and real reform – right now. We need leapfrog jumps and audacious ambitions. And I’ll bet you believe that too.

Here is how we should begin.

First, we must stop the attack on the people of this state by the utilities. On my first day in office, I will fire the whole board of directors of Santee Cooper. I will find a way to force the entire board and senior management of South Carolina Electric and Gas to resign – and make them all give back their tens of millions of dollars in golden parachutes and obscene bonuses. I will establish a truly independent commission – separate from the legislature - to find out what went wrong and who was responsible. And, as part of any settlement, the utilities must roll back rates to 2007 levels and refund to the people all the billions of dollars they wasted.

It’s really simple: We want our money back – and people should go to jail.

This election is about who is going to run this state – you and me or the utilities companies?

Second, we must demand the toughest ethics laws in the country and run the crooks out of the statehouse. It doesn’t cost a penny to have clean and honest government. Legislators should not be doing personal business with state government or with companies that hire lobbyist - none. There should be 100% personal financial disclosure and transparency to stop ‘dark money’ payments for retainer fees and consulting contracts to legislators. They are little more than legalized bribes. This is the kind of stuff that happens in third-world countries. We are better than this.

Politicians who sell out our state for a few pieces of silver – Democrat or Republican - should go to jail – for a long time.

Third, and most importantly, we'll totally re-invent our state's public education system from pre-K to post-grad to make our schools the best in the South. It's the single most important thing that we will do. What do we have to lose, we have the worst schools of any of the 50 states? We'll study the best schools in the county – and learn from them – everything is on the table. And, we'll build a brand-new, student-centered school system from the grassroots, bottom up with parents, students, teachers, and community leaders – and not from the top down with legislators and so-called experts.

If we don't fix education in this state – nothing else really matters.

To achieve these things, it's about all of us working together to make it happen.

Big change and real reform is hard. It always comes from the outside, from the grassroots up. That's what must happen now.

We must all get involved and help make it happen. If you don't - it won't happen.

That's what this campaign is all about, inspiring people to come together and go to work and bring about the big change and real reform we all want and deserve.

My forefathers had big dreams. They believed in South Carolina and what we could be - even before we were a state.

I believe in South Carolina - and I'm betting that you believe in South Carolina too.

Over my 30 years of working on innovative projects that have made a real difference – I've seen what great things we can do.

I have seen how big we can be.

As a young boy, I often heard my preacher father repeat his favorite quote, "Dream no little dreams for they have no power to move men's souls."

I have big dreams for South Carolina.

And, I believe you have big dreams too – for yourself, your family and our state.

Let's go to work and make them happen.