

BlueWaveNJ Congressional Candidate Questionnaire

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Congressional Candidate, NJ-04

General

1. Why are you the best candidate to win the election in the fall?

My campaign is about ***service over self***. I am a veteran, former small business owner, and prepared myself with three master's degrees. I have learned how to lead in the classrooms of Annapolis and have practiced that leadership around the country and around the world in various positions. The incumbent Chris Smith is a failed leader. My roots are on the Jersey Shore and I exemplify its values. I am also the best candidate because I can win in Republican stronghold that will take the best candidate, with the best strategy, at the right time.

2. What are the three biggest issues you would stress in a general election?

New Economy Jobs. Safety and Security. Health and Wellness. Please refer to the attachment provided for detail on each of these key areas of the Welle for Congress Campaign.

3. Your district is a historically red district. How will you address the specific concerns of right leaning independents to flip them blue?

Beat Chris Smith in the areas he thinks he is strong. I am a veteran and former small business owner who knows what it takes to lead in the military and in the private sector. Smith's record on Women's rights is atrocious; and women are as active as ever in grass roots organizations for change. I stand for equality for women. Our district ranks 11 of 12 CD's in pay equity in NJ- unacceptable. Smith has been complicit in the current Republican agenda; and my view of this behavior is-if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. I am a veteran; and I believe I am in touch with veteran issues more so than Mr. Smith. Additionally, I will continue to listen to communities within my district to best represent them as the campaign develops.

4. When did you move into the district and, if the answer is recently, how will you deal with that question?

I moved back into the district in June of 2017. I have lived the majority of my life in the district. My absence was primarily for Naval Academy and military service. I consider myself a Jersey Shore native.

5. Turnout is key. What steps are you taking to build grassroots support and energy?

Welle for Congress has a top flight, full time staff. We have leaders in the community serving this campaign, and continue to reach out to existing groups and communities in district to

implement their input. We seek first small dollar donations and radiate fundraising efforts from that core, along with fundraising events to support the campaign. The number of volunteers for Team Welle currently exceeds 140 - people are joining the campaign in advocacy and activity.

Economy & Finance

1. The GOP tax plan will add \$1.5 trillion to the national debt through substantial tax cuts to corporations and the wealthy. Moreover by virtually eliminating SALT deductions, many NJ residents will face tax increases. What measures will you propose to make our tax system fairer? Conservatives say the budget imbalance could be offset by cuts to social programs like Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid. Would you agree to cuts in entitlement programs in order to reduce the deficit?

Cuts to entitlements are an unacceptable option; however we must revisit the efficiencies and policies of these programs to ensure that those in need are getting the services they need. When elected, I will push for an amended tax plan that closes loopholes for the wealthy, ensures tax breaks to those who need it, and restores the State and Local Tax deduction.

2. New Jersey's unemployment rate is 4.9 percent, which is 20 percent higher than the national average of 4.1 percent. What federal measures would you propose to improve New Jersey's economy and provide more jobs for people in your district?

I will support jobs in sectors that are growing quickly and support our communities, in sectors like technology and green energy. Additionally, ensuring Americans have access to and financial support for education and training in these new economy jobs are key. Additionally, I will fight for funding back to our state. Currently, we receive only 70 cents for every dollar taxed.

3. Student loan debt is crippling many young Americans. How will you address this ever growing issue.

I will propose working with federal agencies and private banks to ensure students have access to loans and reduced interest rates. Additionally, I will work with other members of Congress for what I call a Civilian GI Bill, and to re-establish programs like the lifetime learning credit and public service loan forgiveness that save students money and offer an investment in our students.

4. Infrastructure investment is desperately needed in the state, but after the tax cut there is limited funding available. How would you propose to fund projects such as the tunnel and other urgent projects for our state? Trump has suggested privatization of much of the infrastructure, would you support his proposals?

I will not support the President's proposal because privatizing infrastructure opens avenues of corruption, and infrastructure is a public good that should be accessible and provided by the government. The current administration has proposed to cut spending and grants for many transportation programs, and I will fight to reissue this funding.

5. Would you vote for any infrastructure bill that did not guarantee full funding for the Gateway project?

The Gateway project was wrongly stopped by former Governor Christie. We have continued to see issues with NJ Transit and commuting problems in the NJ/ metro area. This investment is critical and needs to be a part of an infrastructure project. The NJ delegation, led by Democrats, would ensure this is in any infrastructure bill. Additionally, Governor Murphy has moved on elevating the importance of the transit system's overall improvement and it's priority in his administration.

6. Since 2011, the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau (CFPB) has returned nearly \$12 billion to consumers harmed by financial institutions. The GOP and the Trump administration are doing everything they can to dismantle the CFPB. Will you defend the structure and independent authority of the CFPB as mandated in Dodd Frank, and reject any attempts in Congress to undermine its mandate including: its single directorship; its funding from the Federal Reserve rather than Congress, its rule making and regulatory authority, its enforcement authority with respect to abusive, unfair or illegal activity, its accessible consumer complaint database, and its ability to implement fines to be used to provide restitution to consumers, fund prevention and education activities and its overall work?

The CFPB has been a critical watchdog group since the financial meltdown in 2008. This agency has provided utility and necessity to the U.S. economy. I support Dodd-Frank, and oppose any efforts to dismantle the CFPB and regulations to protect consumers from reckless spending. I will defend the principles of these statutes and agencies when elected.

Health Care

1. What do you see as the most attainable and effective means to attain universal access to affordable health care? What steps would you take to strengthen, build on or move beyond the Affordable Care Act?

I believe that we need to move to a single-payer system. In the meantime, we need to restore the individual mandate in the ACA and work in congress to put in place any short-term fixes that support the ACA and stabilize the insurance markets. We continue to threaten those who need the most help in our society.

2. Will you use your office to push for Medicare for all—or a similar single payer system
I support a single payer health system and will work for the best single-payer bill we can pass in Congress.

3. What will you do for your constituents who do not qualify for a subsidy under the Affordable Care Act and are seeing their premiums and deductibles increase substantially year over year?

There are mid-term fixes to the ACA that congress has not addressed because of partisan/ division politics. I will work to build the bridges necessary to deal with this critical health issue. Stability of the markets, restoring any subsidies that have been removed/ reduced, and “expanding the tent” of participants in the system.

4. Republicans have been trying to defund Planned Parenthood since 2011. What is your position on a women’s right to choose and how big an issue should this be in your race? Please state your specific opinions about restrictions being introduced in Congress and other states.

My position is unimpeachable. I am pro-choice, and it will be a big issue in my campaign and others around the country. The GOP’s recent bills in the House and Senate restrict and limit a woman’s ability to choose their options. State level laws around the country require unnecessary waiting periods and permissions for women to receive the health care they choose. Woman are capable of making their own health decisions, and I support this right to choose.

Social Justice

1. What steps would you propose to reform our criminal justice system and reduce racial injustice?

The criminal justice system itself is discriminatory, and indicative of the overall systematic racism in our country. We must eliminate mandatory minimums in our courts that are clearly biased towards lengthening prison sentences for our minority community. We must focus on treating those addicted to alcohol and drugs. We must empower judges to exercise their constitutionally-provided authority. I support the decriminalization of marijuana and reclassing that drug from a Schedule 1 to a Schedule 2 drug.

2. What is your plan to strengthen enforcement of anti-discrimination laws protecting New Jersey’s LGBTQ residents?

Provide for equality for all under the law. The rhetoric from the current administration coupled with the President’s trans military ban is creating an unsuitable and harsh environment for LGBTQ individuals and allies. I will continue to speak out against this rhetoric and support legislation to make healthcare and other services more inclusive and accessible to LGBTQ individuals.

Education

1. What federal policies would you support to improve our education system?

Eliminate any common core standards. Spend federal money more efficiently and effectively, and continue to invest in our public school education system. I will support and expand STEAM education programs, and ensure access to higher education is affordable, and provide for free community college.

2. The GOP higher-ed plan would end student loan forgiveness. What specific policies would you advocate to ensure that every family in America can afford to send their kids to college?

I support free tuition for community colleges and investing in faculty and alternate programs for a 21st century economy. I support continued student loan forgiveness through a "civilian GI-Bill" that creates loan forgiveness for service to your country. That service can be at a local, state or federal level- working and serving in necessary jobs in our government and education system and. Also, I support expanding student-aid programs through direct relationships with lenders.

3. What is your position on funding for school vouchers and school testing? What do you believe is the future role of charter schools in our country?

Vouchers can be and are effective in specific areas. School testing must be appropriate to individual communities and determined as such by local boards of education. Charter schools are effective in specific areas, but due to their self selective nature can isolate certain segments of the communities, as well as potentially drain money away from public schools. Regardless, our public schools must be the cornerstone of our educational system.

Environment

1. In NJ there are multiple underfunded or completely ignored Superfund sites. How will you deal with this issue as your district's representative?

Superfund sites are a danger to a community's environment, and the health of those living around it. As CD04's district representative, I will call on the EPA to address and clean these sites. Our environment and health are linked, and it is crucial we protect and invest in our environment.

2. Numerically, how would you rank climate change as an important issue facing our nation? What issues do you believe are more important? What will you do in Congress to address the impact of climate change?

In the top 3 of overall issues. Reducing our carbon footprint and protecting our waterways are 1 and 2 in this category. I will introduce legislation on each topic, and support other legislation that fights climate change. This is a national security issue for our country.

3. What if anything do you believe we should be doing to promote environmental justice?

Environmental justice is a social, economic, and environmental issue. The communities affected by environmental change, disaster, or waste should be included and leading discussions on change in their own communities. Community members are the biggest stakeholders in environmental changes, and they should be able to give input and lead change in their own communities.

4. What is your position on fracking? Should the regulation of fracking be solely at a state level?

We should be promoting clean and safe energy rather than fracking. Fracking can contaminate groundwater and increase the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and should be better regulated.

Immigration

1. Between 700,000 and 800,000 DACA recipients wait in limbo as legislation is tied to billions of dollars for the border wall. How would you protect them and address the border security issues being tied to the proposed legislation in Congress? Would you support a broader Dream Act that includes a path to citizenship for all the undocumented that entered the US as children?

Yes, I would support expanding the Dream Act as described above. Border security is also an important issue; but cannot be addressed by building a wall. There is better technology and practices that can accomplish our security goals (drone technology, port security improvements, etc) which would be more cost-effective.

2. In his State of the Union Address, Trump outlined the ways he wants to roll back legal immigration, including ending the visa lottery system and limiting family reunification policies to spouses and children, as a compromise for providing a path to citizenship for up to an estimated 1.8 million undocumented immigrants brought here as children. What would your response be to Trump's proposal? Do you think we need immigration reform and, if so, what would you propose?

While at its heart Trump's proposal is divisive and lacks the requisite forethought to enact reasonable policy, I do believe that we need to take a hard look at our immigration system. Are we fulfilling our obligations as a free and powerful society to take in immigrants? Are we encouraging scientists, artists, doctors, and engineers to come to our shores and make our country better? Are we ensuring that we properly vet potential immigrants so that they pose no threat to our national security? That is our national legacy and at our moral core.

3. There has been a recent severe increase in attacks on immigration advocates by ICE. What would you do to help protect their right to defend immigrants?

First, I will work with ICE leadership to ensure we are only pursuing illegal immigrants who have either committed violent crimes and present a clear danger to our communities. Secondly, I will bring ICE and immigrant advocates in my community to the table to better influence and introduce federal policy. Lastly, I denounce the harsh deportations seen this past year, such as raiding hospitals for undocumented immigrants receiving much needed care.

Additional

1. Do you believe that the Second Amendment only applies to state militias or does it restrict the right to regulate guns? What specific federal legislation should be passed to reduce gun violence?

The Supreme Court has interpreted the Second Amendment in vastly different ways over the past two centuries. While our Founders were no doubt crafting a document they believed would outlive them, and generations to follow, there is no doubt that their concept of a firearm and state militia has drastically changed in our modern world. I believe absolutely in a citizen's right to defend him or herself and family, as well as to hunt; but I do not believe that assault rifles are necessary for either. I propose a comprehensive assault weapons ban as well as limits on ammunition available for purchase. Additionally, we need to overhaul the background check system in this country and close loopholes like those that are present at gun shows.

2. Please share your thoughts on marijuana legalization.

I support the decriminalization of marijuana in our criminal justice system. I support the legalization of medical marijuana. I believe that each state should regulate recreational marijuana. I support the study of this issue, along the lines of Senator Cory Booker's recommendations to assess the impact across our state.

3. What is your position on clean elections and getting money out of politics? What specific legislation, if any, would you support with regard to clean elections and getting money out of politics?

I support and will vote to end citizens united. I support term-limits and public funding of elections and term-limits in both houses of congress.

4. What specific legislation, if any, would you support with regard to clean elections and getting money out of politics?

See above response.

5. Do you believe that Congressional Democrats have been too cooperative or not cooperative enough with the administration and Congressional Republicans?

I believe that cooperation and bipartisanship is crucial for an effective and efficient government. Due to the polarized nature of our nation's current politics, both democrats and republicans have forestalled efforts to work together to highlight an issue important to the respective party. I believe that the narrative of "us vs. them" must end, and the government should work together to push policies that democrats, republicans, and the public can agree upon and support.

6. There is a substantial possibility that impeachment will be the most dominant issue for the next Congress. Do you currently support the impeachment of President Trump?

Like many others, I am awaiting the findings of the Robert Mueller investigation. If collusion or obstruction of justice are among the findings, I will support impeachment.

7. Under what circumstances would you support his impeachment? What evidence would you need to see to support his impeachment?

I would consider impeachment if an investigation yields the burden of proof specified in the Constitution that the President violated the law.

8. Would you support any change in Democratic leadership in the House? Do you believe that younger members of Congress should have a greater role?

Yes. I support electing Rep. Frank Pallone to the Speakers position. I do believe that younger members of Congress should have a greater role. I would support Democratic leadership in the House that reflects both my values as well as the values of our citizens.

9. Would you support a federal law (as proposed by Senator Markey) to overturn the recent FCC repeal of net neutrality rules?

Yes

INFORMATION ON POLICY POSITIONS FROM WEBSITE:

PILLAR ONE: NEW ECONOMY FUTURE

NEW ECONOMY JOBS

The economy of our district, like our nation, is changing. Workers need new skills and investors need new opportunities. Each professional chapter in my life prepared me to help shape and grow the new economy, from my first job as a busboy and short-order cook to co-founding a software company after earning my MBA at the University of Maryland. I will stimulate small business growth, while protecting unions and consumers as careers shift towards the health, technology, trades, green, and financial services sectors. By supporting and embracing the new economy, and supporting education, entrepreneurship, and apprenticeships, I'll create career opportunities for all NJ CD4 residents.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Not every young person needs a college education to be successful. We have all experienced technology becoming more deeply rooted in our lives; so too should we embrace the need to close the technical skill gap in our current workforce and foster technical know-how broadly. Government, business, and educational leaders must align toward improving our "talent pipeline." In fostering this agile workforce, we are then ready to reinvent ourselves as legacy industries modernize and new sectors emerge. This is a paradigm shift from the "one job for a lifetime" assumption in many of our current educational systems.

GENDER EQUALITY

The time is overdue for women to have equal pay, control over their reproductive rights, access to all workforce opportunities. Ensuring equality will make America more competitive. Current legislation reflects an unwillingness to trust women to make their own medical decisions, a lack of support for women in the workplace, and a gap in discrimination and sexual assault protections. I will fight for commonsense policies that will meet the needs of women and families. Ensuring women's rights is a moral imperative and an economic necessity.

TAX PLAN

The GOP-Chris Smith Tax plan is bad for every New Jerseyan. I have owned a house in New Jersey since 2004. The combined State and Local tax burden barely allows many NJ residents to stay afloat. The new Republican tax plan disproportionately hurts New Jersey residents. It simply fails to support the working and middle-class families as promised by leadership; and serves as a payout to corporations and the wealthiest 1%. A new tax bill needs to

close loopholes for the wealthy, ensure tax breaks go to those who need it, and restore the State and Local Tax deduction.

EDUCATION

I am a proud product of NJ 4th District public schools, graduating from Wall High School in 1997. I will fight to make sure our schools get the investment they need to lead the country, and provide the next generation the same opportunities I enjoyed. We need to invest in our teachers so they can prepare students for a digital economy. I oppose diverting public funds for private schools at the expense of public education. We need to reduce the burden of standardized testing on teachers and students, so that teachers can spend more time teaching and students can spent more time learning.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

Colleges should be affordable for everyone who seeks higher education. I was fortunate to get my undergraduate education and graduate school using federal funding; but I would not have been able to afford a degree without substantial financial assistance. I will fight for policies that allow all those seeking a degree to get the same opportunity and financial assistance to achieve their educational goals. I believe we can create a Civil Service Education Bill (similar to the GI Bill) for those that give back to their community and country. Also, I believe community colleges should be low cost or free to in-state students.

PILLAR TWO: Health & Wellness

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Health care is a human right and should be separated from a person's job. Health care is an investment in our people and shared future. We must ensure that all Americans can receive the health care they need without enduring financial ruin. But even more importantly, making sure everyone can access health care is the right thing to do. I will work to protect and strengthen the health care system while also supporting innovative plans to continue expanding accessibility. I believe that these reforms should build towards a system that truly guarantees health care for every American.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

I'm committed to protecting women's access to reproductive health resources. I believe women ought to have the freedom to choose their path in life and the government should protect that right. Through supporting Planned Parenthood, paid family leave, and legal protections for survivors of abuse, I will work to ensure that women are given equal support and opportunity under law.

SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, AND MEDICAID

We should honor our commitment to hard working families who paid into federal services. Social Security and Medicare plays an essential role in guaranteeing financial stability for older Americans. Medicare is a moral, critical program for seniors. Cuts to this essential program to provide tax cuts for the wealthy is unacceptable. I will fight to guarantee Medicare beneficiaries continue to receive the benefits they need, while continuing to modernize the program to promote 21st century care.

PILLAR THREE

SAFETY AT HOME AND ABROAD

DOMESTIC SECURITY

I was in my final year at the Naval Academy on 9/11 when terrorists attacked our country. We must continue to be-vigilant to prevent future attacks. To do so, we need to streamline the processes by which our intelligence agencies communicate so that verified and actionable information is used to keep us safe. I will ensure that the most highly-trained personnel with the best technologies and equipment will be guarding against terrorism and protecting our airports, ports of entry and commerce, public spaces, and borders.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Columbine. Virginia Tech. Newtown. San Bernardino. Orlando. Las Vegas. We live in a society where we are constantly asking ourselves where it will happen next? I support the Second Amendment. However, we need stronger and more sensible gun violence prevention policies in order to protect our people, schools, churches, and public spaces, including: 1) Expanding background checks; 2) Bans on high-capacity magazines and bumpstocks; 3) Keeping firearms from individuals with a history of domestic violence or mental illness; 4) Ban of assault weapons.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

North Korea's regime represents an existential threat to our nation and our allies. On the Korean Peninsula, nuclear and conventional warfare should only be options of last resort. The loss of life and damage to the global system would be catastrophic; in point of fact bringing great risk of another world war. In Congress, I will demand multilateral negotiations with the goals of 1) de-escalating the current aggression on the Korean peninsula, 2) reducing the number of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula and around the world, and 3) moving toward a constructive relationship with the people of North Korea.

IMMIGRATION AND THE BORDER

The majority of undocumented individuals in the U.S. contribute to our communities; they are our coworkers, neighbors, friends, and loved ones. DREAMers - undocumented individuals who were brought into the U.S. as minors - should be placed on an immediate path to citizenship. Individuals who entered the U.S. unlawfully as adults - provided they have not committed violent crimes - should be held accountable in a compassionate manner (fines, community service, and/or back tax payment with social worker oversight); but also put on a path to citizenship. Our border with Mexico should not be blocked by a wall that we can neither afford nor effectively construct.

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Climate change is impacting everyone in the world, and the residents of NJ CD4 are especially vulnerable to rising sea levels and violent storm systems. We will never forget the devastation wrought by Superstorm Sandy. I stand for re-engaging with the world as a partner in the Paris Climate Accords, moving toward an all-renewable energy future. My wife, Angela, and I spend weekends hiking, swimming, and enjoying the outdoors. As a member of Congress, I will work to ensure that all people and families in the New Jersey CD4 have the opportunity to enjoy and raise their own families in a country whose water, air, and land remain beautiful and clean. We do not need to choose between growing the economy and protecting the environment. I will encourage investment in renewable energy, secure and efficient electricity distribution, and updated transportation infrastructure.

