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# Sumter's guide to the 2026 Statewide Primaries



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## South Carolina primary ballots set; election is June 9

BY KAYLA GREEN

[kayla@theitem.com](mailto:kayla@theitem.com)

Of the 91 people who filed to run for a county, state or federal seat in this year's general election, 47 will be on one of two primary ballots in June.

Statewide primary elections will be held Tuesday, June 9, as candidates seek their party's nomination for the general election, a presidential mid-term year, on Nov. 3.

South Carolina is an open primary state, which means you do not have to declare a party and can choose which party's ballot to cast. When runoffs are needed, voters who cast that party's ballot can participate, as well as registered voters who did not cast any primary ballot. For example, if you voted in the Republican primary, you could vote in any Republican runoff, but you could not vote in a Democratic runoff. If you did not vote in the original primary, you could choose any party's runoff.

The Democratic primary will feature six races that will be on everyone's ballots, including candidates vying for state comptroller general, governor and lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state superintendent of education, state treasurer and a U.S. Senate seat. Some voters in Sumter will also decide their choice for state House of Representatives District 51 and Sumter County Council District 6,

while some in Sumter and Lee counties will vote for U.S. House of Representatives District 5, and some in Sumter and Clarendon counties will vote for U.S. House of Representatives District 6.

On the Republican ballot, four races will be on everyone's ballot, including those for state attorney general, state commissioner of agriculture, governor and lieutenant governor, and U.S. Senate. In addition, some voters in Sumter and Clarendon counties will

vote for their choice for U.S. House of Representatives District 6.

Two Libertarians are vying for the U.S. Senate seat.

Looking ahead to November, the candidate who secures the Democratic nomination for the U.S. House District 51 seat and the Sumter County Council District 6 seat will almost certainly win the position in the general election because there are no Republicans or candidate in other parties running. Write-ins are allowed on South Caroli-

na ballots. All other primary winners will face opposition in November.

There are 44 candidates who are unopposed in their own party in June.

In November, there will also be general municipal elections for Sumter and Pinewood.

*The Item* reached out to candidates with Q&As about their platforms, experience and ideas, and the responses in *The Sumter Item Impact* are the ones we received by the deadline we set for all candidates.

### CANDIDATES RUNNING OPPOSED IN THEIR PARTY PRIMARY

#### DEMOCRATS

##### Comptroller General

- Tiffany Boozer
- Bruce K. Cole

##### Governor and Lieutenant Governor

- Jermaine Johnson
- Mullins McLeod\*
- Billy Webster

##### Secretary of State

- Jason Belton\*\*
- Edwina Winter

##### State House of Representatives, District 51

- David Weeks\*
- Melissa J. Weeks

Richardson

##### State Superintendent of Education

- Lisa Ellis
- Sylvia Wright

##### State Treasurer

- Vincent Coe\*
- Trav Robertson Jr.\*

##### Sumter County Council, District 6

- Gloria Rose Lee
- James T. McCain Jr.

##### U.S. House of Representatives, District 5

- Andrew Clough
- Mallory Dittmer

##### U.S. House of Representatives, District 6

- James E. Jim Clyburn\*
- Frederick R. Goodwin\*

##### U.S. Senate

- Annie Andrews\*
- Brandon P. Brown\*
- Kyle Freeman\*

#### REPUBLICANS

##### Attorney General

- Stephen Goldfinch
- David M. Pascoe\*
- David Stumbo

##### Commissioner of Agriculture

- Jeremy B. Cannon\*

- Danny Ford

- Cody Simpson\*
- Fred West

##### Governor and Lieutenant Governor

- Jacqueline Hicks DuBose\*\*
- Pamela Evette
- Joshua Kimbrell\*
- Nancy Mace\*
- Ralph W. Norman
- Rom Reddy
- Alan Wilson

##### U.S. House of Representatives, District 6

- John Peterson\*
- Maurice Washington

#### U.S. Senate

- Calvin Cowen\*
- Paul Dans\*
- Thomas Keith Dismukes
- Lindsey Graham\*
- Pat Herrmann
- Mark Lynch\*
- Darius L. Mitchell\*

#### LIBERTARIANS

- U.S. Senate
- Jason Elliot Brenkus
- Kasie Whitener

\* Did not respond to Q&A by deadline.

\*\* Could not be reached.

## OSTEEN

PUBLISHING COMPANY  
Established 1894

36 W. LIBERTY ST., SUMTER, S.C. 29150  
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The Sumter Item is published each Wednesday and Saturday by Osteen Publishing Co., 36 W. Liberty St., Sumter, SC 29150, and delivered via USPS. Major holiday delivery may be altered due to USPS schedule.

Periodical postage paid at Sumter, SC 29150.

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to Osteen Publishing Co., 36 W. Liberty St., Sumter, SC 29150.

Publication No. USPS 525-900



*Best Elected Official  
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**Murrell Smith**



  
**MURRELL  
SMITH**  
REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 67

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126 N. Main Street, Sumter, SC 29150

(803) 778-2471

Paid For By Murrell Smith for House

## Sumter precincts

**Barrier Free** – Voter Registration Office, 129 E. Liberty St. at Magnolia Place, Sumter

**Bates** – Bates Middle School, 715 Estate St., Sumter

**Birnie** – Birnie Hope Center, 210 S. Purdy St., Sumter

**Burns-Downs** – Alice Drive Middle School, 40 Miller Road, Sumter

**Causeway Branch 1** – Millwood Elementary School, 24 Pinewood Road, Sumter

**Causeway Branch 2** – Millwood Elementary School, 24 Pinewood Road, Sumter

**Cherryvale** – Cherryvale Community Center, 4340 Confederate Road, Sumter

**Crosswell** – Crosswell Elementary School, 301 Crosswell Drive, Sumter

**Dalzell 1** – Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

**Dalzell 2** – Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

**Delaine** – Delaine Community Center, Wedgefield

**Ebenezer 1** – Ebenezer Middle School, 3440 Ebenezer Road, Sumter

**Ebenezer 2** – Ebenezer Middle School, 3440 Ebenezer Road, Sumter

**Folsom Park** – Willow Drive Elementary, 26 Willow Drive, Sumter

**Furman** – Furman Middle School, 3400 Bethel Church Road, Sumter

**Green Swamp 1** – Sumter School District, 1345 Wilson Hall Road, Sumter

**Green Swamp 2** – Sumter School District, 1345 Wilson Hall Road, Sumter

**Hampton Park** – Meeting House at Memorial Park, 407 W. Hampton St., Sumter

**Hillcrest** – Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

**Horatio** – Horatio Fire Station, 7720 Sumter Landing Road, Horatio

**Lemira** – Lemira Elementary School, 952 Fulton St., Sumter

**Loring** – Crosswell Elementary School, 301 Crosswell Drive, Sumter

**Magnolia-Harmony** – South Sumter Resource Center, 337 Manning Ave., Sumter

**Manchester Forest** – Wedgefield Fire Station, 2035 Highway 261 S., Wedgefield

**Mayesville** – Mayesville Fire Station,

20 S. Main St. East, Mayesville

**Mayewood** – RE Davis College Preparatory Academy, 345 Eastern School Road, Sumter

**McCrays Mill 1** – Sumter County Career Center, 2612 McCrays Mill Road, Sumter

**McCrays Mill 2** – Sumter County Career Center, 2612 McCrays Mill Road, Sumter

**Millwood** – Millwood Elementary School, 24 Pinewood Road, Sumter

**Morris College** – North HOPE Center, 904 N. Main St., Sumter

**Mulberry** – North HOPE Center, 904 N. Main St., Sumter

**Oakland Plant 1** – Oakland Primary School, 5415 Oakland Drive, Sumter

**Oakland Plant 2** – Oakland Primary School, 5415 Oakland Drive, Sumter

**Oswego** – Crestwood High School, 2000 Oswego Road, Sumter

**Palmetto Park** – Central Carolina Technical College, 660 N. Guignard Drive Bldg 700, Sumter

**Pinewood** – Manchester Elementary School, 200 Clark St., Pinewood

**Pocotaligo 1** – Lakewood High

School, 350 Old Manning Road, Sumter

**Pocotaligo 2** – Lakewood High School, 350 Old Manning Road, Sumter

**Privateer** – Pocalla Springs Elementary School, 2060 Bethel Church Road, Sumter

**Rembert** – Rembert-Rafting Creek Community Center, 450 Hwy. 261 North, Rembert

**Salem** – Rural Fire Station, 6090 Myrtle Beach Hwy., Gable

**Salterstown** – Chestnut Oaks Middle School, 1200 Oswego Road, Sumter

**Savage-Glover** – South Sumter Resource Center, 337 Manning Ave., Sumter

**Second Mill** – USC Sumter Arts/Letter Lecture Room, 200 Miller Road, Sumter

**Shaw** – Shaw Heights Elementary School, 5121 Frierson Road, Sumter

**South Liberty** – American Legion Home Bldg., 28 Artillery Drive, Sumter

**South Red Bay** – South HOPE Center, 1125 S. Lafayette Drive, Sumter

**Spectrum** – Kingsbury Elementary

School, 825 Kingsbury Road, Sumter

**St. John** – Shiloh Community Center, 475 Puddin Swamp Road, Lynchburg

**St. Paul** – Cherryvale Elementary School, 1420 Furman Drive, Sumter

**Stone Hill** – Jehovah Baptist Church, 803 S. Harvin St., Sumter

**Sumter High 1** – Sumter High School, 2580 McCrays Mill Road, Sumter

**Sumter High 2** – Sumter High School, 2580 McCrays Mill Road, Sumter

**Sunset** – Kingsbury Elementary School, 825 Kingsbury Road, Sumter

**Swan Lake** – Willow Drive Elementary, 26 Willow Drive, Sumter

**Thomas Sumter** – Hillcrest Middle School, 4355 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

**Turkey Creek** – Lemira Elementary School, 952 Fulton St., Sumter

**Wilder** – Wilder Elementary School, 900 Floral Ave., Sumter

**Wilson Hall** – Wilson Hall School, 520 Wilson Hall Road, Sumter

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שירת החיים



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Mezzo Soprano



Ari Streisfeld  
Violin



Jason Calloway  
Cello



Lynn Kompass  
Piano

## Early and absentee voting

### EARLY VOTING INFORMATION FOR STATEWIDE PRIMARIES — JUNE 9

The early voting period for the Statewide Primary starts on Tuesday, May 26, and ends Friday, June 5 (closed on Saturday and Sunday and state holidays).

Early voting centers are open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

#### The following location(s) will be used for statewide primaries taking place on Statewide Primaries in Sumter County:

County Voter Registration Office: 129 E. Liberty St., Sumter

Catchall-Shaw Community Center: 2680 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell

### HOW CAN I VOTE ABSENTEE?

#### Step 1: Get your application

You can submit your request for an application as early as Jan. 1 of the election year.

Call, visit or send your request by U.S. mail to your county voter registration office.

You must provide your name, date of birth and last four digits of your Social Security Number.

You will be mailed an application.

Find more information on how Immediate Family Members and Authorized Representatives can request a voter's application at <https://scvotes.gov/voters/absentee-voting>.

#### Step 2: Complete, sign and return the application

Return the application by U.S. mail or personal delivery to your county voter registration office as soon as possible.

The deadline to return your application is 5 p.m. on the 11th day prior to the election.

Find more information on how Immediate Family Members and Authorized Representatives can return a voter's application at <https://scvotes.gov/voters/absentee-voting>.

#### Step 3: Receive your absentee ballot in the mail

Voters who have applied early will be mailed their absentee ballot approximately 30 days before the election.

#### Step 4: Vote and return the ballot

Return your ballot to your county voter registration office or an early voting center either by mail or personal delivery.

Must present photo ID when returning the ballot in person.

#### Acceptable photo IDs

– Driver's license issued by a state within the United States



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO

A voter casts a ballot in the June 2024 South Carolina primary. The 2026 primary is June 9.

– Another form of identification containing a photograph issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles or its equivalent by a state within the United States

– Passport

– Military identification containing a photograph issued by the federal government

– South Carolina voter registration card containing a photograph of the voter

Place the ballot in the "ballot here-in" envelope and place the "ballot here-in" envelope in the return envelope.

Be sure to sign the voter's oath and have your signature witnessed. Anyone age 18 or older can witness your signature. A notary is not necessary.

Ballots must be received by the county voter registration office by 7 p.m. on election day.

Ballots returned by mail should be mailed no later than one week prior to election day to help ensure timely delivery.

Find more information on how Immediate Family Members and Authorized Representatives can return a voter's ballot at <https://scvotes.gov/voters/absentee-voting>.

*Re-Elect*  
**James T. McCain, Jr.**  
 for Council District 6  
**on June 9th**  
 Accessible | Accountable | Available  
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 Election is on 6/9/26  
 Early voting is 05/26 - 06/05  
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 James T. McCain, Jr., Democrat



**VOTE!** | James T. McCain, JR.

Paid For By The James T. McCain Campaign

## Sumter County Council District 6



**GLORIA ROSE LEE**  
DEMOCRAT

is to foster economic development but significantly limit zoning changes and special exceptions that threaten quality of life for area residents.

B) Equity in education — Ensuring all schools in Sumter County have the resources, programs and professional staff to prepare students to be productive citizens is another major area of concern for residents in District 6. Far too long, Sumter School District schools have been undermined. My goal is to ensure that regardless of where you live in the county, the school your child attends will deliver a quality education, second to none. My plan to address equity in education includes establishing a formal partnership between council members and Sumter School District trustees. Providing the fiscal support necessary to recruit and retain quality educators, maintain facilities, establish STEAM programs and resources across the board in each of our schools is my priority in this regard.

C) Ingress and egress on private dirt roads is a major public safety, public health and quality of life issue affecting residents in District 6. My objective is to ensure we provide public services to every citizen in Sumter County. My plan involves streamlining budget priorities and expenditures to maximize funding for this and other basic services.

### What successes have you seen in your district that you want to build on?

A) Receiving feedback from the community about more business coming into the community, meaning the community wants growth and revenue.

B) Knowing the people in this county want growth in Sumter School District, working with Sumter County Council and being transparent about the needs of the schools.

### Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

— 30+ years, Sumter Community Neighborhood Group (chaplain, organizer, community support, youth advisor, aid seniors);

— 18+ years, life membership, Lincoln High School Preservation Alumni Association (chairperson of the youth pageant and scholarship program, assistant treasurer, former chaplain); and

— 35+ years of motivational speaking and writing monologues, teaching and training others in their advancements.

— I assist with South Sumter's annual Veterans Day event. I am an ordained minister.

### Why are you running?



**JAMES 'JIM' T. MCCAIN JR.**  
DEMOCRAT  
INCUMBENT

Current councilman running for reelection

### Have you run for political office before?

Yes. Elected to current position in 2014.

### How long have you lived in your district?

Born and raised in District 6, moved back to the home I was raised in in 2009.

### Current job/profession:

Retired manager with UPS in Atlanta for 35 years

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I am the incumbent candidate with 11 years, 4 months of institutional knowledge and experience in the position.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in your district (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

Street conditions and blight are two concerns top of mind. I will continue using my experience and influence to continue what I have already done in these two areas as I have detailed in the next couple of paragraphs.

### What successes have you seen in your district that you want to build on?

Obtained funds from the state to remove blighted properties in the greater Turkey Creek area of District 6.

Obtained a \$1.5 million grant from Congressman Jim Clyburn to continue removal of blighted properties in District 6.

Obtained funds from the state to pave the entire Forest Hill subdivision in District 6.

Streets on the south side and west side of District 6 are being paved, as we speak, with more to come.

Came up with, and with the unanimous vote of county council implemented, the idea of placing paraprofessionals in targeted K through third grades to increase reading scores with those targeted students.

The per-capita income in Sumter County has increased to over \$52,000 per year during my tenure as chairman of Sumter County Council with industries such as eVac and most recently

the Georg Utz Company choosing Sumter. I will continue to work with Sumter County Council and our Economic Development team to bring even more industries with high-paying jobs to Sumter.

### Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

Chairman of the trustee board at Westend Community Church.

Past chairman of the board of United Ministries.

Past member of the board of the Sumter YMCA.

I am a native of Sumter and son of educator and civil rights leader James T. "Nooker" McCain Sr. and educator Ida Mae Chennault McCain. I integrated the Sumter school system in 1965 by attending McLaurin Junior High School. I graduated from Edmunds High School and furthered my education at the historic Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Upon graduation in 1973, I began a 35-year career in management with UPS in Atlanta. I am also the proud father of three and have three granddaughters and two grandsons.

Upon retirement, I returned to Sumter in 2009 and have re-integrated himself into the community, which I call home. I currently serve as chairman of Sumter County Council.

I also serve the community by serving on boards and commissions, in addition to those listed above, in Sumter including:

- Vice chairman of the Governor's Palmetto Pride Board;
- Chairman of the Sumter Area Transportation Study (SUATS) Committee;
- First vice chairman of the Board of Santee Lynches Regional COG;
- Chairman of the Chief Elected Officials of Santee Lynches Regional COG;
- Member of the Shaw/Sumter Community Council;
- Honorary commander of the 20th Fighter Wing;
- Member of the executive committee of the Main Street Society;
- Graduate of the 2016 class of Leadership Sumter;
- Graduate of the Tuomey Fellows Class XVII;
- Past chairman of the Board of the Sumter County Gallery of Art; and
- Past chairman of the South Carolina Association of Counties' County Council Coalition.

## S.C. House of Representatives District 51

*Editor's note: These responses have been edited for clarity.*

### MELISSA J. WEEKS-RICHARDSON

DEMOCRAT

#### What are you running for?

I am running for South Carolina House of Representatives District 51.

#### Have you run for political office before?

I was disqualified to run for Senate 35 because that was not in my district.

#### How long have you lived in your district?

Over 25 years

#### Current profession?

Pastor and author

#### What challenges / concerns do you see in your district, and how do you intend to improve them?

##### 1. Hate Crime Bill

In looking at the South Carolina Code of Laws 16-3-2410, it is noted that when a person commits a violent crime, note Section 16-1-60 defines what a violent crime is or commit assault by mob in the second degree 16-3-210 (c), and the trier of the fact determines beyond a reasonable doubt that the offense was committed against a victim who was intentionally selected, in whole or in part because of the persons' belief or perception regarding the victim's race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, sexual orientation or physical or mental disability whether or not the perception is correct, the person is subject to additional penalties as provided in subsection (B).

(B) A person who violates provisions in subsection (A) which the section stated above and commits a violent crime as defined in 16-1-60 or commits assault by mob in the second

degree 16-3-210(c) upon conviction is subject to an additional fine of not more than \$10,000 and an additional term of imprisonment of up to 5 years.

However, you must jump down to subsection (D) which states that the additional penalties described in subsection (B) may not be imposed unless the person was indicted, either separately or as a separate count for the underlying offense pursuant to this section against the victim who was intentionally selected in whole or in part because of the person's belief or perception regarding one or more of the factors provided in subsection (A) whether or not the perception is correct, and the person was found guilty of an underlying offense.

This is one area that I see some improvement with the Senator Clementa C. Pinckney Hate Crime Act but also where I see as a concern that must be built on. Statutes already point out what defines a hate crime. It is noted that a hate crime is a felony or misdemeanor motivated the perpetrator's prejudice usually intense bigotry based on the victim's race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation. These are often termed bias crimes or acts of intimidation (Blacks Law Dictionary, 10th Ed.).

According to the FBI in 2020, there were 8,263 incidents of biased-motivated crimes involving 11,470 victims that were reported to the FBI. However, this is what was reported during this time. The incidents that continuously renew interest in the applicability of federal laws governing hate crimes and just to name a couple were: Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and the killing of a counterprotester at 2017 United the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, as well as various others. Although these were taken up on the federal level, it still hits home no matter where it took place even if it did not happen right in my neighborhood.

Let's look at a few specific incidents involving hate crimes or racially charged incidents handled by aggravated breaches of peace or investigated by federal authorities because South Carolina does not have a hate crime statute. South Carolina remains one of the only two states in the United States without statewide hate crime laws.

1. Racist vandalism (January 2022) The incident where there was a 17-year-old charged with aggravated breach of peace after digital sign on South Pike West was altered to display racial slur. This was investigated by Sumter Police Department.

2. Grocery store incident (April 2021) 27-year-old charged with aggravated breach of peace after a racially charged profanity disturbance on Wedgefield Highway.

It is pointed out that because South Carolina does not have a hate crime law so specific, incidents that might be labeled hate crimes may be or are often prosecuted under charges such as assault, harassment or aggravated breach of peace and, according to the Department of Justice, most of the hate crimes in South Carolina are driven by race, religion or sexual orientation.

I will reiterate that South Carolina is one of only two states in the U.S. without statewide hate crime statutes, and it is time that this is fixed.

##### 2. Criminal justice reform

There are several key areas of concern when it comes to criminal justice reform, such as:

Sentencing reform

Police reform

Re-entry reform

The improving of public safety

(There is so much to get into when it comes to improving public safety and looking back at the gun laws and not just the gun laws or creating hate crime statute but also building on the crime statutes.)

##### 3. Health care, disability and special needs

There are various areas under the health care umbrella from insurance to the health facilities to ensure that patients get the best care and that health care professionals [have] the best working environment as well as compensated and well-staffed facilities.

I think that one of the main things that I think is very important is policies and advocacy. Upgrading the laws, ensuring that there is enforcement of disability rights laws being sure that abuse and neglect is being prevented.

Improvement of accessibility and infrastructure as well as upgrading older facilities in South Carolina. Improvement [of] insurance [to make] sure that individuals can get the best medical care as well as those without medical disabilities are getting the best health care coverage and are able to get the best medical care. [Also, to ensure their] pharmaceutical needs [are met] without having [to] choose between medications, paying the doctor for an office visit, having to decide should they go to the hospital/medical facility to get treatment [or] wait it out because they owe medical bills. Improvements will have to be made with insurance companies as to what they will allow and how much they are paying the physicians. There are very good doctors, some that will even come to the patient's home and do house visits. But when you bill the insurance companies, if the charge is \$80 for a home visit because the person is disabled or elderly and does not use video chat, the insurance company allows \$30 but then they pay \$22. Now, let's say that doctor had to drive 50 miles; they are not billing for gas. The doctor had to give an injection, as well as other do duties [like] check urine or something right there, but those tests are not allowed. The doctor is not getting paid.

I think that there are so many concerns. There are a lot of great things that have been done, but it's time for an upgrade.

## U.S. House of Representatives District 5



**ANDREW CLOUGH**  
DEMOCRAT

#### Why are you running?

I'm running because working families in South Carolina's 5th District deserve leadership that understands their daily struggles. As a working-class airport ramp agent, I know what it means to work long hours and still feel the pressure of rising costs, health

care expenses and economic uncertainty. I'm running to fight for affordable health care, stronger infrastructure, better wages, education and workforce development and a government that works for people — not just the wealthy and well-connected.

#### Have you run for political

#### office before? If so, explain:

No. This is my first time running for public office. I decided to step forward because too many people feel ignored by career politicians, and I believe fresh leadership with real-world experience is needed.

#### How long have you lived in

#### your district?

I currently live in Rock Hill and have built my life and work in this region. While I was not born and raised in the district, I have made this community my home and am deeply invested in its future.

# DISTRICT 5

FROM PAGE A7

## Current job/profession:

Ramp agent with American Airlines at Charlotte Douglas International Airport

## What makes you qualified for the seat?

I bring real working-class experience, not political insider status. I understand firsthand the challenges families face with inflation, health care costs, housing affordability and job security. My campaign is built on listening to people directly, walking neighborhoods and showing up in every county of the district. I believe representation should come from someone who understands everyday life, not just Washington politics.

## What challenges/concerns do you see in your district (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

1. Cost of living and economic pressure – Families are working full-time and still falling behind. I support lowering health care costs, investing in infrastructure, strengthening domestic manufacturing and protecting good-paying jobs.
2. Health care access and affordability – Too many people delay care because of cost. I support stronger price transparency, prescription cost reductions and expanded access to affordable care in both rural and suburban communities.
3. Trust in government – People feel disconnected from leaders who don't listen. I will prioritize transparency, accessibility and direct engagement with voters across all counties in SC-5.

## What successes have you seen in your district that you want to build on?

Our district has strong communities, hardworking families, growing small businesses and major opportunities in manufacturing, logistics and education partnerships. I want to build on that momentum by supporting workforce training, local business growth and infrastructure improvements that keep our region competitive.

## Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

Yes. I spend significant time canvassing neighborhoods, attending local events, meeting with community leaders and engaging directly with voters across the district. I believe being present matters. I also stay involved through labor and community conversations that connect directly to the needs of working families.



**MALLORY  
DITTMER**  
DEMOCRAT

## Why are you running?

For too long, Washington has been paralyzed by partisan bickering and gridlock while the very real needs of families in Sumter County and across District 5 have gone unmet. I'm running to change that — to help mend our broken politics, bring living costs down, improve access to health care and protect public education. I'm running to prioritize people over party and results over rhetoric, to find commonsense solutions that actually make life better for us all.

Change isn't easy — it will require real conversation, real commitment and real collaboration, but that is what I do best and what I am running to do! I am honored to be a candidate in this race.

## Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

While I have not run for elective office myself, I've been deeply involved in political advocacy and campaigns in York County and the state. In 2024, I helped manage local campaigns for moderate state House, Senate and school board candidates, succeeding in beating the far right in seven out of nine races. This experience taught me how to listen to voters, build winning coalitions and understand the specific challenges our district faces.

## How long have you lived in your district?

My family and I made the decision to move to South Carolina in 2020, and it is the first place that truly feels like home since we left our native Midwest after college. Our family has planted deep roots in the warm and welcoming community of Fort Mill: my husband, Drew, found his "forever home" as an AP history teacher at one of the local public high schools, and I found our "forever village" through my work in campaigns and public education advocacy.

## Current job/profession:

I own a small marketing consulting company, MBK Brands, and balance my business interests with work as a community advocate and co-founder of Community Advocates for Public Education (CAPE) York County.

My professional career began in the fashion

industry, where I learned the art of negotiation, how to manage diverse teams and the importance of the bottom line. After 15 years as a corporate retail executive where I rose to the level of vice president, I felt a deep calling to find more meaningful work. Since 2022, I've dedicated myself to public service, using my management skills to run successful campaigns and help entrepreneurs launch successful businesses.

## What makes you qualified for the seat?

At a time when Washington desperately needs less conflict and more cooperation, I'll bring a unique blend of negotiating skills and nonpartisan advocacy to the job. During my career in the private sector, I negotiated complex contracts between parties with competing interests so that everyone came away feeling like a winner. As a co-founder of Community Advocates for Public Education, I brought people together in nonpartisan efforts to safeguard our public schools.

I'm not a career politician; I'm a creative problem solver who understands both boardroom and kitchen table budgets. I can compromise when it's helpful, but I won't bend to pressure from special interests. Most of all, I'm ready and eager to serve — I'll work harder for the families of District 5 than anyone ever has!

## What challenges/concerns do you see in your district (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

Rising cost of living — When families are trapped in a daily struggle to pay the bills, there's no room for planning, let alone dreaming, for the future. I'll focus on economic policies that curb inflation and address the corporate and political greed that drives up the costs of housing and daily essentials. I'll support raising the minimum wage, enacting fair tax and trade policies, lowering child care costs and making housing more affordable.

Attacks on public education — Our schools should be centers of excellence, not battlegrounds for partisan ideology. I will advocate for strong schools free from political interference, ensuring teachers have the resources they need to focus on student success. I'll fight to protect funding for public schools, increase access to early childhood / pre-K programs and lower costs for college and vocational training.

Congressional gridlock — Our political system is designed for division. It might work for politicians in D.C. who like to grandstand for the cameras, but it doesn't work for the people who sent them there. I intend to bypass the bickering by building a coalition of Democrats, Republicans and Independents focused on reasonable priorities and practical solutions

that have broad consensus. Some specific policy goals include term limits, an end to partisan gerrymandering and limiting the role of billionaires and big business in government.

## What successes have you seen in your district that you want to build on?

District 5 has a strong, enduring sense of community, and our most inspiring success stories spring from our commitment to each other. I've seen neighbors from all walks of life come together to support our local schools, small businesses and farms. That support encourages innovation and growth, even in the most challenging times.

One of the most dramatic examples is our agricultural sector, which is the backbone of South Carolina's economy. Our family farms have shown remarkable resilience through initiatives like regenerative farming, smart irrigation and clean energy, but they face increasing pressure from rising costs, extreme weather and unstable markets. I'll support them in Washington by fighting to lower input costs like fertilizer and seed, improve environmental infrastructure, address labor access and improve health care in rural areas.

## Are you involved in the community? How so?

Yes, deeply. Beyond my role as a parent and a business owner, I co-founded Community Advocates for Public Education (CAPE) in York County. This nonpartisan group was born out of a need to protect our public schools from becoming hyper-politicized. My work there involves engaging with parents, educators and taxpayers to find common ground and ensure that our children's safety and education remain non-negotiable priorities.

## WANT TO BECOME A POLL MANAGER?

If you'd like to apply to be a poll manager in Sumter County, fill out the form at <https://tinyurl.com/276d67nb>. Poll managers must be able to list 40 pounds or more and have the ability to stand for long periods of time. Mail the completed form to:

Voter Registration/Elections,  
141 N. Main St., Room 114,  
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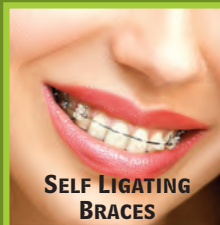
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## U.S. House of Representatives District 6



**MAURICE WASHINGTON**  
REPUBLICAN

### Why are you running?

I'm running because too many families in this district are working harder but still falling behind. I know that struggle firsthand, and I've spent my life helping people build financial stability and opportunity. It's time we focus on real results — better jobs, stronger communities and accountability for how taxpayer dollars are spent.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

Yes. I previously served on Charleston City

Council, where I helped oversee budgets and community development programs. That experience taught me how to manage resources responsibly and deliver results that directly impact people's lives.

### How long have you lived in your district?

I've lived in South Carolina my entire life and have deep roots in this region. I understand the challenges our communities face because I've lived them and worked alongside families across the district for decades.

### Current job/profession:

I am a financial advisor and business owner with over 40 years of experience helping individuals, families and small businesses plan, grow and protect their financial futures.

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I bring real-world experience managing money, solving problems and helping people move forward. I've worked with

families trying to make ends meet, small businesses trying to grow and communities trying to thrive. Combined with my public service experience, I understand both how policy is made and how it impacts people in real life.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in your district (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

1. Economic opportunity that pays — Too many jobs don't lead to financial stability. I will fight for policies that support small business growth, workforce training aligned with real jobs and access to capital so people can build wealth — not just get by.
2. Access to health care — Rural communities are losing access to care. I support expanding access through local providers, telehealth and practical solutions that bring care closer to where people live.
3. Infrastructure and flooding — Roads, drainage and flooding continue to impact

daily life and economic growth. I will push for smarter investment in infrastructure that improves safety, supports business development and protects communities.

### What successes have you seen in your district that you want to build on?

This district has strong communities, a proud military presence and a deep agricultural base. I want to build on those strengths by creating more opportunities for small businesses, supporting our service members and veterans and ensuring growth benefits the people who live here.

### Are you actively involved in the community? How so?

Yes. I've spent decades working directly with individuals and families to help them achieve financial stability and long-term success. I've also served in public office and remained engaged in efforts that support economic growth and community development.

## U.S. Senate



**THOMAS KEITH DISMUKES**  
REPUBLICAN

### Why are you running?

I'm running because too many people feel like their voice no longer matters. Decisions are being made by a political system that rewards money, influence and insiders instead of hard work, honesty and truth.

I'm not a career politician — I'm a husband, father of five, small business owner and teacher. I'm stepping up because I believe we need leaders who will serve, not rule ... who will represent, not manipulate ... and who will stand firmly for faith, freedom and fiscal

responsibility.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

No, I have not run for political office before. That's intentional. I'm not part of the political machine, and I'm not trying to become a career politician. I'm running to do the job, serve with integrity and then return to my life.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I was born and raised in Spartanburg. Associate degree from Spartanburg Tech, B.S. and M.S. from Clemson. Moved to Tennessee for my wife to finish her master's at ETSU and now proudly call York County home. South Carolina isn't just where I live — it's where I've built my life, raised my family, worked, taught students and served in my community.

### Current job/profession:

Motivational storyteller, educator, small business owner and youth director at FBC Clover. I work with young people, adults and families and run a family-based agricultural business. My work has always centered around developing people,

solving real-world problems and creating value — not talking about it.

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I bring real-world experience — not political experience.

— I've balanced budgets in my own home and business.

— I've worked with people across the country and around the world.

— I've raised a family and understand the pressures families are facing.

— I've taught the next generation and see firsthand what's working — and what's not.

Most importantly, I'm not beholden to PACs, special interests or party insiders. I answer only to the people of South Carolina.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

1. Economic pressure and inflation Families across South Carolina —

including Sumter and the Midlands — are being squeezed by rising costs.

My approach: Fight for responsible federal spending, reduce waste and support policies that lower inflation and strengthen small businesses.

2. Growth without infrastructure We're seeing rapid growth, but infrastructure — roads, utilities and planning — is struggling to keep up.

My approach: Advocate for smart federal support where appropriate while ensuring decisions stay local. Growth should benefit communities, not overwhelm them.

3. Government overreach and loss of trust

People are losing faith in government because they feel ignored or controlled.

My approach: Defend constitutional freedoms, increase transparency and push back against unnecessary federal overreach.

### What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

South Carolina has seen strong economic growth, a thriving small business culture and a commitment

to preserving our values.

I want to build on:

— Support for small businesses and entrepreneurs;

— Workforce development and skills training; and

— Community-driven solutions rather than top-down mandates.

We don't need to reinvent South Carolina — we need to protect what's working and strengthen it.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Yes, deeply.

— I teach and mentor students and families on a regular basis.

— I lead youth/family programs and outdoor education experiences.

— I organize and participate in community events.

— My wife and I have volunteered as coaches for 68 sports teams.

— My family and I have spent nearly 30 years serving at a camp for children and adults with special needs, training and encouraging both staff and campers.

## U.S. SENATE

FROM PAGE A10

— I work closely with families and young people to build leadership, character and practical life skills.

— I run a family farm and local business.

Serving others isn't something I started for a campaign — it's how I've lived my life.



**PAT  
HERRMANN**  
REPUBLICAN

### Why are you running?

I am running to restore the safety and independence that defined the South Carolina of my youth. Growing up, my family felt safe enough to hand me the car keys to drive to the beach alone, but today our communities are plagued by a rising tide of violence. I refuse to accept this as the new normal or continue the "federal delay" of career politicians like Lindsey Graham, who has spent 30 years focused on global grandstanding while our infrastructure and security crumble. I am a practitioner who will prioritize the South

Carolina kitchen table over the Washington status quo.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

Yes, I currently serve as an executive committeeman for the Horry County Republican Party.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I moved to South Carolina at age 18 (33 years ago) to attend Coastal Carolina University and have been a resident ever since. I currently live on a 32-acre farm just four miles from the beach in Myrtle Beach.

### Current job/profession:

I am a small business owner specializing in flood mitigation, cleaning and restoration.

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I bring technical competence and scientific precision to a role usually filled by career politicians. My background as a scientist allows me to solve complex issues like failing infrastructure and water flow rather than relying on broad slogans. I will also ensure that Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) are held fully accountable to industry-standard mitigation practices. I possess the transparency and integrity required to obtain the security clearances necessary for high-stakes committees, ensuring I will never be a "sidelined senator." I am also a small business owner for 26 years,

and I was on the Coastal Carolina University Alumni Board for 9.5 years.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

1. Infrastructure red tape: The Midlands and Sumter suffer from failing roads and bridges due to excessive bureaucratic delay. I will cut this red tape and ensure these communities receive fair access to federal infrastructure dollars.

2. Economic squeeze and energy scams: Families are being penalized by "Peak Hour" utility traps that hike bills by hundreds of dollars for usage during cold winter mornings. I will end these scams and eliminate the state income tax to put immediate money back into household budgets.

3. Rising crime and public safety: I will move beyond rhetoric by supporting clear, enforceable federal legislation like the HALO Act, which I will fight to expand so we can provide a permanent police presence in our ERs and hospitals to protect our doctors and nurses.

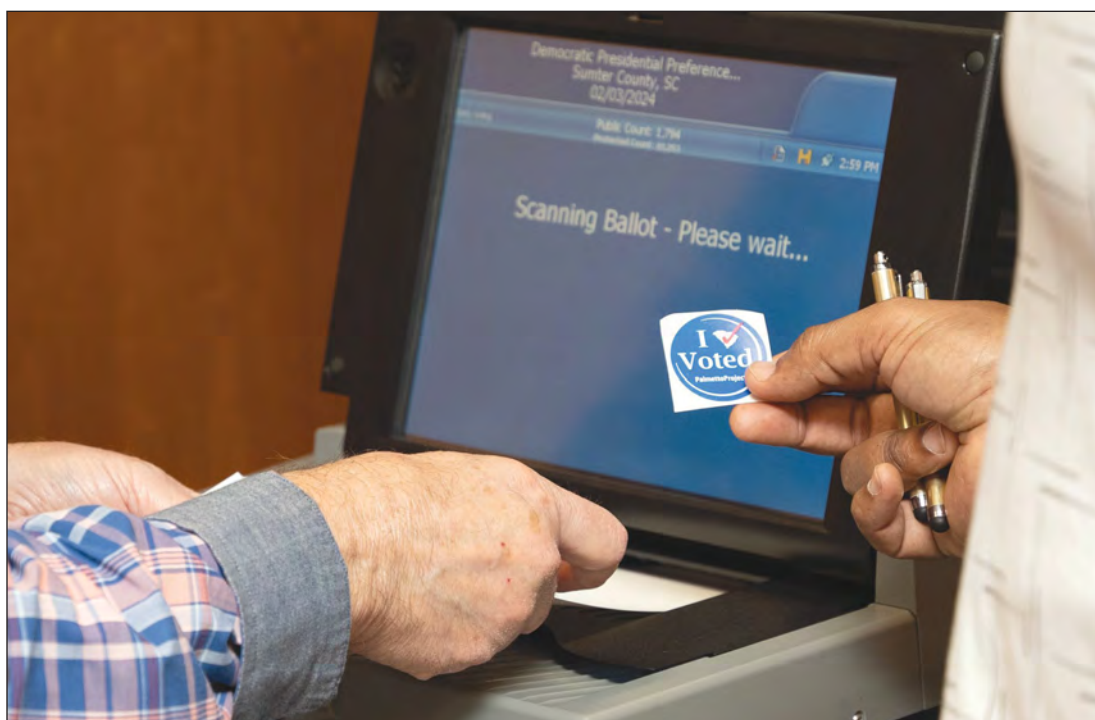
### What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

I want to build on the momentum for state autonomy. South Carolina has already voted to adopt permanent daylight saving time, but we are currently blocked by a redundant federal act. I will repeal the Uniform Time Act of 1966

to return that power to our state. Additionally, I want to build on our reputation as a haven for retirees and entrepreneurs by abolishing the IRS and implementing a simplified flat tax that rewards hard work rather than bureaucracy.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Yes. Beyond my role as an executive committeeman, I am a hands-on practitioner in local infrastructure and flood mitigation advocacy. I use my scientific expertise to help residents protect their homes and navigate the failures of the federal flood insurance system, ensuring that real-world solutions are applied to our community's most pressing challenges. I also offer my company's services free of charge to individuals in need, including providing compassionate support to families with loved ones in hospice care during some of their most difficult moments. I also live on a 32-acre farm, where I donate eggs to the underprivileged neighborhood children so they have access to healthy food at no cost. Additionally, I built a basketball court on my property to provide local neighbors with a safe place to play, rather than using an unsafe dirt road with heavy vehicle traffic. I also volunteer at Myrtle Beach Christian Church, located next to my home, assisting in any way needed for church functions. This includes offering the use of my property for church events and organizing community fishing events for locals. I most recently offered the creek to the FOP and veteran outreach.



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO

A Sumter resident votes during the 2024 June primary election.

## REGISTER TO VOTE

You must be registered at least 30 days before any election in order to vote in that election, and registration by mail application must be postmarked at least 30 days before that particular election to be eligible. The registration deadline for the 2026 Statewide Primaries has already passed, but there are several ways to register in South Carolina to vote in the general election on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

South Carolina does not have registration by party. In primaries, you can vote in only one party's primary.

Register to vote online at <https://tinyurl.com/5n8s6cjd>, or use the same site to download a registration form that you can then mail, email or fax to the Sumter County Voter Registration and Elections office. You can also register to vote in person at the office at Magnolia Place, 129 E. Liberty St., Sumter.

Source: SC Votes

# Attorney general



**STEPHEN  
GOLDFINCH**  
REPUBLICAN

**Why are you running?**

I'm a veteran, a military prosecutor, a judge advocate general, a conservative senator and a businessman. I have the experience and qualifications to handle all three divisions of the attorney general's office with dignity and honor. I want to be the next attorney general because I can be highly effective for South Carolina, a place I love dearly.

**Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:**

S.C. House (2012-2016), S.C. Senate (2016-2026)

**Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?**

Horry, Georgetown and Charleston counties, my whole life

**Current job/profession:**

S.C. senator and attorney

**What makes you qualified for the seat?**

The AG's office has three divisions: 1) the criminal division; 2) the civil and administrative division; and 3) the legislative division. As a military prosecutor, I've worked extensively within the criminal justice system. As a civil and administrative lawyer in my private practice, I've fought the government and the agency-state for a living. And as a conservative senator, I've crafted, voted for and funded the tools to give prosecutors what they need to hold criminals accountable.

**What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?**

The violent crime backlog, which is approximately four to five years in Sumter County, is a serious problem, but it is also a serious problem statewide. When we have four- to five-year backlogs of violent crime, much of the evidence goes stale and the defendant often goes free, re-victimizing victims repeatedly. To solve this, I would install 20 or more deputy AGs across the state and start working these backlogs down.

**What successes have you seen that you**

**want to build on?**

The Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force and the immigration task force have both been successful at the AG's office, and I would build upon that leadership.

**Are you actively involved in your community? How so?**

In addition to serving in the state Senate, I serve in the National Guard, and my wife and I both are active and serve our church (Coastal Church of Murrells Inlet).



**DAVID  
STUMBO**  
REPUBLICAN

**Why are you running?**

I'm running for attorney general to keep South Carolina families safe and uphold the rule of law. As a career prosecutor with over 20 years of

experience, I've dedicated my life to putting violent criminals, drug dealers and predators behind bars. I'm running to take that experience statewide — defending the Constitution, supporting law enforcement and ensuring justice is delivered for victims across South Carolina.

**Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:**

Yes. I was first elected solicitor for the Eighth Judicial Circuit in 2012 and am currently serving my fourth term, representing Abbeville, Greenwood, Laurens and Newberry counties.

**Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?**

I was born and raised in South Carolina and have spent my life here. My family and I live in Greenwood, where we have built our lives and raised our children.

**Current job/profession:**

Eighth Circuit solicitor (chief prosecutor) and career criminal prosecutor.

**What makes you qualified for the seat?**

I bring more than two decades of prosecutorial experience, including serving as solicitor for the Eighth Circuit, a prosecutor in the South Carolina

SEE ATTORNEY GENERAL, PAGE A13

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## ATTORNEY GENERAL FROM PAGE A12

Attorney General's Office and a supervising prosecutor for the Statewide Grand Jury. I've prosecuted hundreds of criminal cases and worked alongside state and federal law enforcement to protect our communities. My entire career has been spent in the courtroom fighting for victims and upholding the law.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

1) Violent crime and public safety — Keeping communities safe remains the top priority. I will continue to aggressively prosecute violent offenders and support law enforcement to ensure criminals are held accountable.

2) Drug trafficking and fentanyl — Drug trafficking, especially fentanyl, is impacting families across South Carolina. I will work with local, state and federal partners to target traffickers and dismantle these networks.

3) Protecting victims and vulnerable populations from human trafficking to crimes against children — protecting victims is

critical. I will ensure strong prosecution of offenders and continue efforts to safeguard vulnerable populations across our state.

### What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

As solicitor, we have strengthened public safety efforts across the Eighth Circuit and implemented innovative programs like the Veterans' Treatment Court to help address underlying issues while maintaining accountability. I want to build on these successes by expanding effective, results-driven approaches to improve safety and justice across South Carolina.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Vanessa and I are very active in our community and church. We have been blessed to be a part of and give our time and resources extensively to pro-life organizations, crisis shelters and substance abuse recovery ministries over the course of our 26-year marriage. Serving people is what we have been called to do by the God who rescued us, so we will continue to walk in that regardless of whether or not I am elected to be the next attorney general.

## JUNE PRIMARY ELECTION

### ABSENTEE BALLOT REQUEST DEADLINE

#### Received by

Friday, May 29, at 5 p.m.

### Early voting

From Tuesday, May 26, to Friday, June 5

### ABSENTEE BALLOT RETURN DEADLINE

#### Received by

Tuesday, June 9

## NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION

### VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE

#### Email, online, fax or in-person request by

Sunday, Oct. 4

#### Postmarked by

Monday, Oct. 5

### ABSENTEE BALLOT RETURN DEADLINE

#### Received by

Tuesday, Nov. 3

### EARLY VOTING

From Monday, Oct. 19, to Saturday, Oct. 31

### ABSENTEE BALLOT REQUEST DEADLINE

#### Received by

Friday, Oct. 23, at 5 p.m.



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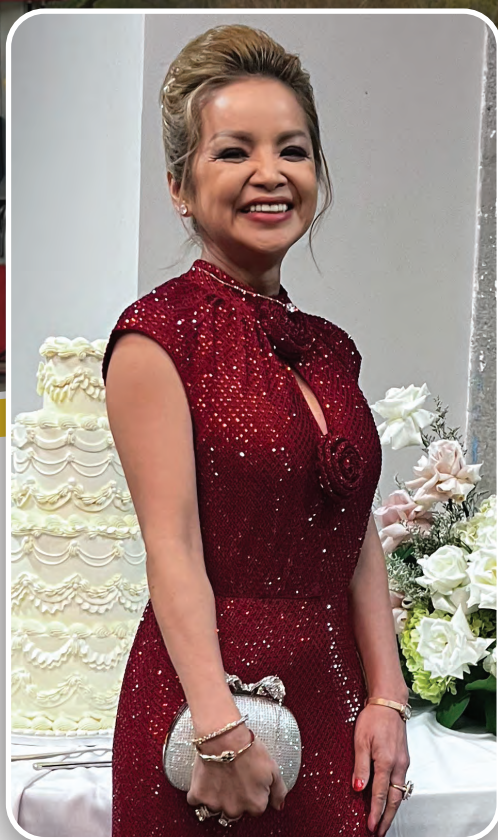
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## Commissioner of agriculture



**DANNY LEE  
FORD II**  
REPUBLICAN

### Why are you running?

— Protecting farmland: South Carolina is losing farmland at an alarming rate to development and urban sprawl. Protecting working land is essential to preserving our rural communities, food supply and agriculture economy.

— The future of farming: Farmers are aging, and young farmers are being priced out of the land. Without a clear path for succession and affordability, family farms will continue to disappear. We must make it possible for the next generation to farm.

— Agriculture infrastructure: South Carolina lacks the processing facilities needed to support farmers. Crops, timber and livestock are often sent out of state — or out of the country for processing, costing us jobs and economic growth. Farmers need infrastructure and infrastructure needs farmers.

— Family farms: Family farms are the backbone of South Carolina agriculture, yet they face mounting financial pressure and uncertainty. The Department of Agriculture must be a true partner from planting to processing to profit — so farmers have a clear path to success.

— Forestry and timber: Forestry remains a vital industry, but mill closures and lost processing capacity have weakened the sector. We need leadership that will work alongside foresters to keep this industry.

— Local food and food security: Supporting local farmers strengthens our economy and protects our food supply. It is important to invest in South Carolina farmers and keep food production close to home.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

No, I have never run for political office before. I was compelled to run for South Carolina commissioner of agriculture because I am passionate about community, steadfast in pursuit of reform, and I believe the agency should be led by someone who understands agriculture from the ground up, not another career politician. I have seen how decisions made without farmer input can increase costs, limit opportunity and put family farms at risk.

### Where and how long have you lived in

### South Carolina?

I was born in Greenville and raised in Clemson. My father coached at the University of Arkansas when I was in elementary school. After five years, we moved back to our family farm in the Upstate. I lived in Colorado, Texas and Florida for a handful of years during my college and young adult years. I am now raising my children in the Upstate on the same farm that I played and worked on when I was growing up. South Carolina has always been "home" to me.

### Current job/profession:

Father, husband, farmer, pilot and agribusiness owner

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

As a current grower and rancher, I understand firsthand what it takes to keep an operation running in today's economy. From navigating federal and state regulations to finding reliable markets and managing labor, I have experienced the challenges South Carolina farmers face every day. My commitment to agriculture is deeply rooted in my family. As the son of former Clemson football head coach Danny Ford, I grew up around the values that define South Carolina — hard work, accountability, teamwork and service. Watching my father shaped my conviction that proven leadership means listening, responsibility and earning the trust of the state you represent.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

Like many regions in S.C., the Midlands is facing challenges and threats to land. I will encourage master planning policies that seek to balance conservation of natural resources with "smart growth" development. I will prioritize protecting farmland from overdevelopment by corporate or foreign investors. I will support regulatory oversight and transparency for large land sales and proposed changes in land use (i.e. solar fields, data centers, etc). As commissioner, I will facilitate collaboration between public and private partnerships as we address these challenges facing the state we all love.

### What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

The farm to school program has seen tremendous growth in the number of schools that participate. However, the program only has 21 farm participants. I will prioritize expanding the program by improving and streamlining processes that will remove unnecessary barriers for farmers to participate in the program. This would ultimately benefit our local growers and allow our children to receive healthy fresh food with less preservatives. In S.C., 1 in 6 children are facing food insecurity,

which is unacceptable with healthy food available in their communities. Our children cannot grow and learn while they are hungry.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

I am actively involved in serving my community in a variety of ways. Depending on the day, I may be baling hay with my father, helping my neighbor with their farming needs, providing testimony at county council meetings against data centers taking over our land, advocating alongside parents of children with epilepsy and special needs or volunteering as a pilot assisting rural churches in N.C. that were devastated by Hurricane Helene.



**FRED WEST**  
REPUBLICAN

### Why are you running?

I'm running for South Carolina commissioner of agriculture to put farmers first and ensure our state's agricultural industry remains strong for generations to come. With decades of experience in agribusiness, I've seen firsthand the challenges our farmers face from overregulation to foreign threats to our farmland. I'm ready to bring a business-minded, conservative approach to protect our agricultural heritage, strengthen food security and promote South Carolina-grown products.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

No. This is my first time running for public office. My career has been focused on leading in the private sector and serving in key roles within South Carolina's agricultural community, preparing me to step into this position with real-world experience and a results-driven mindset.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I am a lifelong South Carolinian and proud native of the Palmetto State. My roots here have shaped my values, my work ethic and my commitment to serving the people and agricultural community of South Carolina. My wife, Michelle, and I reside in Batesburg Leesville.

### Current job/profession:

I recently served as director of market development at the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, where I worked to expand opportunities for farmers and connect

South Carolina products to markets. I stepped away from the position to focus on campaigning full time for farmers and the people of South Carolina.

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I bring over 30 years of leadership experience in agribusiness and public service. As a former vice president at Amick Farms, I helped lead a company with more than 3,500 employees, overseeing operations ranging from regulatory affairs to public relations. I've also served in leadership roles across major agricultural organizations and worked at the S.C. Department of Agriculture. This combination of private-sector leadership and public service gives me the experience needed to lead effectively on day one.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

- 1) Loss of farmland and overdevelopment — South Carolina is rapidly losing valuable farmland to development. I will work to protect agricultural land, promote responsible growth and ensure farmland stays productive for future generations.
- 2) Overregulation and burdens on farmers — Farmers are facing increasing regulatory pressure that makes it harder to operate. I will advocate for commonsense policies that support farmers instead of hindering them.
- 3) Market access for local producers — Many farmers, especially in rural areas like Sumter and the Midlands, struggle to find consistent markets. I will expand market development efforts to connect local producers with retailers, institutions and consumers, strengthening our agricultural economy.

### What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

South Carolina has made significant progress in promoting local agriculture and growing the economic impact of agribusiness across the state. I want to build on these successes by expanding market opportunities, strengthening branding for South Carolina-grown products and continuing to grow agriculture as one of our state's leading industries.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Yes. I've been actively involved in both the agricultural community and local service organizations. I've served in leadership roles with the Palmetto Agribusiness Council and the South Carolina Poultry Federation, and I currently co-chair Family Promise of the Midlands, which supports families facing homelessness. I serve as a ruling elder and trustee at my church.

## Comptroller general



**TIFFANY BOOZER, CPA**  
DEMOCRAT

### Why are you running?

The comptroller general's role is professional, not political! I'm running because I believe the state's accounting office should be led by a trained accountant. The management and reporting of taxpayer dollars is essential, and I want to ensure state financial reporting is accurate, transparent and easy to understand. People deserve clear information about how public funds are used, and the systems behind that information should be strong and reliable.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

No, this is my first time running for office.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I was raised in Clinton and later moved to Columbia, where I graduated from Lower Richland High School. I also attended college right here in South Carolina. This state has always been home, and I'm dedicated to doing my part to keep South Carolina thriving for generations to come!

### Current job/profession:

I'm a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and currently serve as an internal auditor within the South Carolina Comptroller General's Office, where I work on strengthening internal controls, reviewing financial processes and helping ensure the accuracy of state accounting records.

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I am a CPA with over 10 years of audit experience in both government and private sector roles. That background has given me a strong foundation in financial reporting, internal controls, compliance and risk management. In my current position, I work directly with state financial systems, which gives me practical insight into how public funds are tracked and reported. I understand both the technical side of accounting and the importance of accountability in public service.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to the Comptroller General's role, and how do you intend to improve them?

1. Financial accountability: State financial records must be accurate and dependable. I support strengthening internal controls and oversight processes to reduce errors and improve consistency in reporting.
2. Modernizing financial processes: Some state processes are still outdated. Updating systems and underlying sources would improve efficiency, reduce manual work and help ensure more timely and accurate reporting.
3. Transparency and clarity of financial information: While progress has been made, financial data can still be difficult for the public to interpret. I would work to improve reporting tools so taxpayers can better understand how funds are used over time.

### What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

The Comptroller General's Office has made meaningful progress with the transparency portal. I would build on that work by enhancing it to include year-over-year comparisons so the public can clearly see trends and changes in state spending and revenues. I also support expanding detail in areas identified as higher risk to strengthen accountability and

understanding.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Yes. I serve as treasurer and a graduate of the Talented Tenth Organization, which focuses on developing and investing in future leaders. I am also actively involved at Forward City Church, where I participate in community and faith-based engagement. In addition, I founded Blacklist Network, a professional network designed to connect individuals from all backgrounds and across all industries to encourage collaboration and career development.



**BRUCE K. COLE, PH.D., CPA**  
DEMOCRAT

### Why are you running?

I am running for several reasons. First of all, I have been very blessed with a wonderful education, career opportunities and life experiences, and I want to pay this forward.

Secondly, I want to set an example for others who have thought about running for public office.

Third, for those who can identify with my candidacy (e.g., the thousands of students I have taught, people I've met through church and other activities, etc.), I want to give them a reason to vote and become civically involved.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I want to help our state improve its performance. South Carolina is in the 20th percentile of the country

on a number of performance measures (e.g., crime, economic opportunity, education, infrastructure, etc.). I want to help the citizens of South Carolina get the value that they deserve for their tax dollars.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

Yes. I was a candidate for the position of public service commissioner for S.C. Congressional District 2. My campaign was unsuccessful.

I was a candidate for a competitive board position with the Cable Cooperative of Palo Alto, California (80,000 subscribers), where I served for five years.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

My family roots are in Edgefield County. However, I moved to Forest Acres from Boston, Massachusetts, with my wife and two children in 2006 to teach at Allen University. Prior to that, we had a vacation home in Beaufort.

### Current job/profession:

I manage a real estate investment fund. Also, I am still involved in academia. Since 2006, I have taught college and done research in the areas of real estate and public value creation. I also have a personal finance book in pre-publication that has been used this past year by freshmen at the University of North Carolina. In 2023-25, I established an undergraduate real estate program at North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina.

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I bring a rare combination of real-world experience and academic rigor to this race. But credentials alone don't move the needle... results do. I have degrees from Harvard, Stanford, Northeastern and Clemson universities. I have worked in some of the finest

SEE **COMPTROLLER GENERAL**, PAGE A18

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# COMPTROLLER GENERAL FROM PAGE A17

companies and institutions in the world and have been exposed to incredible character-building experiences. I have a proven track record as a financial executive who creates value for public and private institutions, with a special expertise in navigating complex environments. For example, I ran a \$25 million product line for AT&T, doubling its revenue in two years and cutting costs by half. I served as CFO of the Boston Public Library (the nation's oldest) where I managed more than \$1 billion in assets. The board of directors of the John Hancock Life Insurance company asked me to cut the costs necessary for the firm to go public, and I delivered \$200 million in annual savings. I received a special award from TRW Inc. for successfully launching high-tech companies in Silicon Valley using their cold-war era, defense industry technologies. These aren't campaign talking points. They are a track record.

## What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

South Carolina faces a real fiscal challenge ahead. As federal funding to states is expected to decline, state government will be asked to deliver more with less. The comptroller general's office must be prepared to meet that moment with stronger performance measurements across state agencies, greater transparency in how taxpayer dollars are spent and governance built on accountability rather than habit.

But I also believe the citizens of South Carolina should help shape this agenda. Our citizens know where state government is falling short. They know which services matter most to them, their family and their community. I look

forward to holding workshops in Sumter and throughout the Midlands, helping citizens to understand and use the data the CG's office provides and developing metrics grounded in the lived experience of the people the agency is meant to serve.

## What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

Through our nonprofit, the Richard T. Greener Institute, we have held successful workshops across the state that have brought together business owners, community leaders and academics to discuss policies that are important to them.

Some of my former colleagues at the Darla Moore School of Business have made initial arrangements with several state agencies with respect to planning and program evaluation. I want to build on these initiatives to create robust performance measures that can be used by both our state's civil servants and our citizens to ensure that agencies are delivering value for

taxpayer dollars spent.

## Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Former commissioner of the Richland County Airport Commission

Former state chair of the Sierra Club (winner of the Joe Neal Award)

Former board member of Conservation Voters of South Carolina

Member, Friends of the Thomas Cooper Library

Board member of the South Carolina Council on Economic Education

Member of the First Nazareth Baptist Church Brotherhood Men's Chorus

President, Richard T. Greener Institute for Social Policy Research

Member, New York State Society of CPAs (developing continuing education training for CPAs)

Member, American Real Estate Society

## South Carolina governor



**JERMAINE JOHNSON**  
DEMOCRAT

### Why are you running?

I'm running to bring new leadership to South Carolina and build a state that we can be proud of. I'm going to fix the roads, provide better access to health care, especially mental health care, and make life here more affordable.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

I have served three terms in the South Carolina State House of Representatives.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I have lived in South Carolina since I began college here at the College of Charleston in 2004.

### Current job/profession:

State representative

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I have a master's degree in management, a doctorate in business administration, and I've served the people of South Carolina for six years in the Statehouse, passing legislation to fix bridges, reduce taxes on seniors and erect a statue of a civil rights hero on the Statehouse grounds. But what truly makes me qualified is that I understand the struggles of working people, poor people, the marginalized and voiceless, and I know because I have been there. My family lived in motels, I had to feed myself as a child, and I rose from those struggles and became stronger for it. I am qualified because I care about the real problems facing people all across the state, and I don't want anyone to grow up hungry.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

The biggest challenges facing South Carolina are: our poor infrastructure, lack of access to health and mental health care and rising cost of living. To address our poor infrastructure, I

will make sure our public works are properly funded and to shift responsibility (and funding) to counties and municipalities that can act faster than the state. For health care, I plan on expanding Medicaid and funding rural hospitals, guaranteeing there is an OBGYN in every county and making sure mental health is treated with the same urgency as physical health. To address affordability, I plan on building affordable housing, reducing the burden of income tax, mandating a livable, minimum wage and helping unions to secure better conditions for workers.

### What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

While in office, I successfully lowered taxes for seniors, repaired a bridge that had been out of commission for a decade and got approval for a statue of Black civil rights hero Robert Smalls to be placed on the Statehouse grounds, the first statue of a Black man in our state's history. Those three actions represent how I intend to govern this state: fixing our infrastructure, centering people over profits and giving a voice to underserved communities.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

I am heavily involved in my

community as its representative to the S.C. Statehouse. Additionally, I am an adjunct professor at Midlands Technical College, and I still play basketball in several local leagues.



**WILLIAM M. 'BILLY' WEBSTER**  
DEMOCRAT

### Why are you running?

When it comes to experience, passion and determination, I believe that I am best equipped to lead our state, and I am the only candidate with a lifetime of business experience.

We are the fastest-growing state in the U.S.; we have added one million citizens here in the last 15 years, and we will add one million more in the next 10. We simply are not ready. Our infrastructure is inadequate; unmanaged growth and urban sprawl threaten our clean water,

forests, family farms, salt marshes, estuaries, beaches and oceans. We have 500,000 uninsured South Carolinians, and the price of just about everything is going up. We need a governor who is used to solving complex issues. I am the only candidate that has done that.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

No, I am not a career politician.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I was born and raised here.

### Current job/profession:

I am retired, though I teach health care policy at Wofford College.

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I started four successful businesses in four different industries and created thousands of jobs along the way. I have worked for two American presidents at the highest level of government, and I was chief of staff to former S.C. Gov. Dick Riley when he was the U.S. secretary of education. I chaired the board of the largest health care system in S.C. (Prisma Health). I chaired the board of Converse College in Spartanburg,

# GOVERNOR

FROM PAGE A18

and I chaired the board of The Nature Conservancy, the state's largest conservation organization. I have worked in the areas of education, conservation and health care all my life.

## What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

Medicaid expansion will dramatically help underserved communities and rural communities. It will not only expand coverage for thousands of children and families in the Midlands, but it will also help keep rural hospitals open and reduce stress on working families. Expanding Medicaid will reduce crime (as it has in other states), and it will lower the cost of health insurance premiums for everyone.

In addition, infrastructure investment is essential for the Midlands' roads, bridges, water and sewer systems. Development must be carefully managed so that the impact of such development on the clean water and open lands (including family farms) is taken into consideration on the front end and after the developers have begun their projects.

## What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

Gov. McMaster has been a responsible steward of South Carolina's most beautiful places. In Sumter County, Manchester State Forest as well as the PeeDee Basin Initiative are examples of significant land protection projects. We need to continue to build on these initiatives.

## Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Yes. I have chaired numerous boards in Greenville and Spartanburg in the areas of health care (Prisma Health and the Spartanburg Regional Hospital Cancer Center Foundation); in the area of education, I chaired the board of Converse College and Spartanburg Day School. I was also a founding director of the Upstate Warrior Solution, which focuses on the full range of issues affecting vets and first responders.

## South Carolina governor



**PAMELA EVETTE**  
REPUBLICAN

### Why are you running?

As a self-made businesswoman, Christian and mother of three, I'm running to lead our state forward and continue the conservative success we've seen under the McMaster-Evette Administration. I will work to advance President Trump's America First agenda and do whatever I can to make our state better for our people and future generations of South Carolinians. I will use everything I've learned in business, combined with my time in the executive branch, to "Keep South Carolina Winning."

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

I've served alongside Gov. Henry McMaster as lieutenant governor since 2019. We ran together and won in both 2018 and 2022.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I currently reside in Travelers Rest. I've been blessed to call South Carolina home since 2005. I can think of no better place to build a business and raise my children.

### Current job/profession:

Lieutenant governor of South Carolina

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I'm the only candidate in this race with 30+ years of business experience and eight years in the executive branch with a proven record of results in both.

### What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

We must help individuals and families to keep more of their hard-earned money. We can do this by eliminating the state income tax once and for all and lowering property taxes. We must also run state government more efficiently by leveraging technology and rooting out waste, fraud and abuse.

Not only do we have to strengthen our families, but we also have to empower our small businesses that keep our communities strong

by slashing the useless red tape that holds them back from starting, growing and succeeding. Anyone in the business world knows that time is money, so as governor, I will sunset all regulations and bring them back before the General Assembly for review.

It's no secret that our state is seeing unprecedented growth despite our broken roads and bridges. That is why I will bring together state and local leaders, stakeholders and innovators to develop a strategic blueprint to help our state manage this growth effectively, especially in energy, education and infrastructure.

### What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

I'm proud of the historic conservative success our state has seen over the last eight years under the McMaster/Evette Administration.

Together, we took a smart, conservative, common-sense approach to deliver real results for the people and businesses of South Carolina by delivering historic income tax cuts, banning sanctuary cities, advancing school choice, increasing pay for teachers and law enforcement, keeping biological men out of women's sports, protecting the unborn and keeping guns in the hands of law-abiding citizens.

By building on this conservative success, the possibilities are endless for South Carolina.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Over the years, I have been very involved in my local community. Prior to becoming lieutenant governor, my husband and I invested both our time and treasure in myriad nonprofits including St. Jude Children's Hospital, Loaves & Fishes Greenville, American Red Cross, Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Fostering Great Ideas, Julie Valentine Center, The Meyer Center, United Way, American Heart Association, Pendleton Place, Upcountry History Museum and more.

As lieutenant governor, in partnership with PalmettoPride, I created the annual Grab A Bag SC Statewide Cleanup initiative in 2019 and participated in SC7 Expedition to raise awareness for floodwater prevention and the importance of protecting South Carolina's natural resources. I continue to be involved in both of these efforts.

I currently serve on St. Francis Foundation board of directors (affiliated with Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital) and have previously served on the National Association of Professional Employer Organizations (NAPEO) board where I am an emeritus member of the state legislative committee. I also served as a member of South

Carolina's Small Business Regulatory Review Committee prior to taking office.

My family attends Prince of Peace Catholic Church in Taylors, and we continue to be active in our community as opportunities arise.



**RALPH NORMAN**  
REPUBLICAN

### Why are you running?

Columbia has a corruption problem. People are treating being in office like a retirement plan; we are dumping millions of dollars into projects without an end date or transparency, and taxpayer dollars are treated like Monopoly money. No business would ever survive being run this way, and the good people of our state deserve so much better. We need someone with business experience who can streamline unnecessary processes, cut the unnecessary red tape and say no to companies that come in and run us dry.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

I have represented the 5th Congressional District since 2017, and I served in the South Carolina House of Representatives prior to my service in Washington. For years, our people have elected me to represent them because of my backbone, commitment to integrity and unfiltered stance when standing up for what's right. Unlike many of the others, I have a business background. I have signed the back of a paycheck, balanced tight budgets and had families depend on me. My success has been critically dependent on performance. That's why I'm the only candidate with the essential legislative experience to navigate the system effectively and deliver real results without being part of the establishment's inner circle.

### Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I'm a lifelong South Carolinian. I was born and raised right here in Rock Hill. I grew up playing on these playgrounds and walking through our schools, and I have been incredibly blessed to always call our beautiful state home. I'd like to say that if I were born on the other side of the world, I would've ended up here anyway. You

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# GOVERNOR

FROM PAGE A19

cannot find better people than right here.

## Current job/profession:

I achieved success in real estate development and investment in our communities. I served as a CEO and worked alongside my father, who always instilled in me that people matter more than an extra dollar in your account. I now serve our community and volunteer in freedom groups and grassroots conservative organizations, bringing back much-needed principles to South Carolina. I could probably be on a beach somewhere in retirement, but I cannot sit on the sidelines as corruption runs rampant and watch South Carolinians pay the price.

## What makes you qualified for the seat?

I have a unique balance of experience as an outsider. I am versed in our complex political system, understanding how it operates and where issues get caught in red tape or held up. I have seen firsthand the outrageous entitlement politicians feel they have to "power," or to your wallets, and I am no stranger to calling that out. Our system is rife with corruption, and just showing up brazenly without knowing how to

accomplish goals is like putting a data analyst in as head coach at Clemson. I also have extensive executive experience, and I can tell you, running a large business demands grit, mental clarity, strategy and execution. You can't run a business without collaboration. I know how to evaluate return on investment in our rapidly growing state by focusing on what truly benefits our people. This balance, and a true CEO, is exactly what will move the needle with real results and success that our state feels.

## What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

We The People are no longer in charge. Our judges are handpicked by our lawyers; our lawmakers can't be counted on to follow through. Bills are being pushed through left and right that have sneaky backdoor pay raises or clauses that have nothing to do with the issues at hand. People in office are experiencing life so differently from folks at home who make hard decisions and are affected by this entitlement. If we don't get someone in, not a part of this elitist club, but who knows who and what needs to go, then we won't recognize our state in four years.

Not to mention, our infrastructure is crumbling.

Our bridges are on the verge of collapse, our roads are crumbling underneath us, and our buildings aren't being maintained. This doesn't look or sound like the South Carolina I know. The problem is not money. We dump millions of dollars into this problem, and we can't fill potholes with dollar bills. What we need is transparency through auditing, deadlines with measurable targets and an accountable person in charge of following through. My lieutenant governor will serve as my road czar so no one will complain about these same issues again.

Conservative principles are dying out. We have people in office who are trying to destroy the nuclear family, confusing our children and pushing radical ideology. Common sense isn't common anymore, and we have enough to tackle as it is. I am here to bring our constitutional, conservative principles back to our executive office that We The People want to be represented with.

## What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

I will continue to push for and advocate for transparency and accountability. I will not stop voicing what you have all affirmed: We The People deserve to have a voice and a clear view of what is happening behind closed doors. It's simple.

## Are you actively involved in your

## community? How so?

Yes, I'm either out in communities across South Carolina, talking with and working alongside the people I represent, or I'm spending time with my family and my 17 grandchildren. I make it a priority to attend as many forums and grassroots events as possible and, most importantly, to be present for every vote I can in Washington. I am, and always will be, a dedicated public servant to the people who elected me.



**ROM REDDY**  
REPUBLICAN

## Why are you running?

Money and power has been transferred from the citizen to the government. The government has used this transfer to weaponize itself against the citizen through a vast agency state and a judiciary that is no longer independent. We have the highest income tax of any red

SEE **GOVERNOR**, PAGE A23

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# GOVERNOR

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state, property taxes that are a life sentence and government spending at the state and local level that has doubled in the last 10 years. Yet our results in education, roads, median family income, violent crime or any major measurable outcome of spending is dismal and in the bottom 10 of states in the nation. I will end this madness and transfer money and power back to the citizen by eliminating the income tax, eliminating property taxes on cars, reducing agencies from 100-plus to 35, cutting regulations in half and restoring the three co-equal branches so the branches can hold each other in check.

## Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

I have never run for office before unlike the other candidates in the race for governor that have been in government for a combined 53 years! Like President Trump and Elon Musk, I attended the Wharton School for business and have spent my entire life in the private sector building and starting up manufacturing businesses and creating thousands of jobs.

## Where and how long have you lived in

## South Carolina?

I first lived here in the late '80s and bought my first S.C. business in Summerville in 1990.

## Current job/profession:

None. I have no business interests in S.C. or elsewhere. This combined with the fact that I am the first gubernatorial candidate in history to not accept any campaign donations makes me the grenade that needs to be thrown into the swamp to see what crawls out!

## What makes you qualified for the seat?

Congress is about messaging and writing bills, most of which don't see the light of day. This is what the other candidates do, if they do anything at all. Governing is about results. None of the candidates other than me have any governing experience, leave alone getting results as they have demonstrated. Pamela says she is a businesswoman, but she was involved in an HR company that processes payroll for businesses. That is not business experience. It is a transactional experience. Norman was involved in a family real estate development company over 20 years ago. It's like having a cellphone that is 20 years old. The skill set is completely outdated besides being irrelevant to running an operational entity.

## What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially

## relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

I will not split the interests of the state. Overall, the issues are we are overtaxed, overregulated and have power concentrated in one branch (the legislative branch), which is what our founders defined as tyranny. A larger issue is we have no leadership. No one can name the leader of this state. Unless we fix that, we will continue down a path of all talk, social media moments and no results.

## What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

I have an unblemished record in the business world and have been CEO of multiple successful business ventures. In my last venture, I took an artificial turf company installing 22 sports stadiums annually in 18 states to 270 stadiums in all 50 states. Politically, as the founder of DOGESC, we developed bills for judicial reform and equal parenting as well as tools for forensic audits and regulatory cuts, all in about eight months. Our judicial reform bill passed the House with all 85 Republicans supporting it and is now in the Senate.

## Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

My wife, Renee, and I operate a foundation that

focuses on education and elimination of child trafficking. In S.C., the foundation has a pilot in Edgefield school district to use modern reading and math software to bring kids' reading and math skills up. Sixty-eight percent of fourth-graders cannot read at grade level in South Carolina. This is a disgrace. I will fix it.



**ALAN WILSON**  
REPUBLICAN

## Why are you running?

I'm running because families across South Carolina are being squeezed by rising costs, and too many feel like they're falling behind. I've spent my career enforcing the law and holding bad actors accountable, and now I want to take that same mission to state government. As attorney general, I've seen a lot of bad government and incompetence that doesn't rise to a criminal level. But it still should be fixed

SEE GOVERNOR, PAGE A24



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# GOVERNOR

FROM PAGE A23

and addressed. As governor, I will work to make South Carolina more affordable for families, more profitable for businesses and more accountable to the people.

## Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

Yes. I was first elected as South Carolina's 51st attorney general in 2010 and have been reelected four times.

## Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I have lived in South Carolina since I was 2 years old after being born on Fort Wolters in Texas. I currently live in Lexington with my family.

## Current job/profession:

I serve as South Carolina's attorney general, the state's chief prosecutor and chief legal officer. I am also a 30-year combat veteran and colonel in the Army National Guard.

## What makes you qualified for the

## seat?

I've spent over a decade leading as attorney general, working with law enforcement, prosecuting dangerous criminals and defending the rule of law. I've fought against federal overreach and defended South Carolina in court. I also served nearly 30 years in the South Carolina National Guard, including a combat tour in Iraq. That combination of legal, executive and military experience has prepared me to lead on day one. When you've had to make life and death decisions in a matter of seconds, it gives you the courage and discernment to lead and focus on what matters most.

## What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

1. Affordability and cost of living – Families are feeling it at the grocery store, the gas pump and in their utility bills. I will cut wasteful spending, lower taxes and ensure government lives within its means and spends your hard-earned tax dollars

responsibly and transparently.

2. Public safety and crime – Safe communities are the foundation of a strong state. I will continue backing law enforcement, enforcing our laws and ensuring violent criminals are held accountable to keep you and your family safe.

3. Government accountability and growth – State government has grown too fast without enough oversight. I will implement stronger auditing, transparency and accountability measures so taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, including in fast-growing regions like the Midlands. We have to expand in a sustainable, smart way that still respects the character of our communities or everything will come crumbling down, including our already strained roads and bridges.

## What successes have you seen that you want to build on?

We've made strong progress in public safety, working with law enforcement across all 46 counties to keep communities safe. We've also successfully defended South Carolina's laws and Constitution in court and built

partnerships that strengthen our state. I want to build on that momentum by expanding economic opportunity, improving infrastructure and continuing to make South Carolina a great place to live, work and raise a family. We've strengthened our laws to go after drug traffickers, combat fentanyl and protect children from child predators. I want to continue that as governor.

## Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Yes. My role as attorney general requires constant engagement with communities across South Carolina. I regularly work with local law enforcement, community leaders and victims' advocacy groups. I am also actively involved in my church community at Saxe Gotha Presbyterian Church and have supported initiatives focused on strengthening families, serving those in need and giving back locally. My work is rooted in being present, listening and taking action to serve the people of this state. I believe public service is not for me, but for the people. The Office of Governor does not belong to any one person — it belongs to the people of South Carolina.

## Secretary of state



## EDWINA WINTER

DEMOCRAT

## Why are you running?

I am running for a number of reasons. I was triggered to run when the Trump administration signed the EO to re-evaluate all naturalized citizens. As an immigrant and someone who became a citizen in 2018, I was horrified and afraid. South Carolina is my home. I have made community and a life here and didn't want to be driven away. So, I decided to stay and fight and run for office. I decided I was most qualified to be secretary of state. After researching the office, it became apparent that after 24

years of Republican incumbency, it is a much-neglected office that could be doing so much more to improve the lives of South Carolinians. At that point, I was even more motivated to run, as I know I have the expertise and drive to do the work.

## Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

No.

## Where and how long have you lived in South Carolina?

I live in Irmo and have lived in S.C. for nearly 14 years.

## Current job/profession:

Nonprofit founder, real estate agent

## What makes you qualified for the seat?

I have 38 years of business experience, often in highly regulated industries, so I understand the way that business works and what is necessary to help it work better. I understand the need for transparency and accountability in business

operations. My business experience is global. I have worked in the UK, Europe, U.S., China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Therefore, I can be very objective in my view of what works and what doesn't and apply it in office. In addition to that experience, I am also a small business owner in South Carolina, so I understand the challenges of setting up and running a business in South Carolina and ways to improve it. On top of that, I have also founded a faith-based nonprofit in the state and am also a notary. That means I have touched every aspect that the secretary of state office is responsible for. I am a hard worker and know that I have the experience, aptitude and attitude for the office as well as an abiding love for my home state.

## What challenges/concerns do you see in South Carolina (up to 3), especially relating to Sumter and the Midlands, and how do you intend to improve them?

There are many challenges and concerns. Decline in manufacturing, small industrial and business base, aging population, loss of rural health care, many people living below the poverty line.

As secretary of state, I would work to support the formation of small businesses and nonprofits. These are the engine of economic growth. They create and sustain community, bring stability, create generational wealth, allow children to go to college and allow families to buy homes. They also attract other businesses, which builds on their success. Increasing economic activity helps preserve health care options and attracts infrastructure and diversifies the economic base. I would set up Secretary of State offices and portals in local libraries, make the office a one-stop shop for setting up businesses, connect small businesses with grants and resources.

## What successes have you seen

## that you want to build on?

I have seen that the current secretary of state has made some efforts to warn the public about scams and fraud. I would improve on this particularly for our seniors by increasing visibility of the companies and nonprofits that operate in the state, publicizing bad actors and increasing education.

## Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

I am very active in my community. My nonprofit is actively engaged in the community trying to help people create community through Celtic Spirituality. I also sing in a church choir. I play flute for a group that plays in senior living communities and memory care units. I have been a poll manager since the 2020 elections. I am secretary of a local animal rescue. I teach at three Shepherd Centers for older adults as a volunteer and am VP of the Shepherd Center of St. Andrews. I am also a ballroom dancer.

## S.C. Superintendent of Education



**LISA ELLIS**  
DEMOCRAT

### Why are you running?

I am running for superintendent of education because I have been an educator for over 25 years, and that experience has shown me exactly what needs to be changed at the Department of Education. I know that my experience as an educator in the classroom and as an advocate outside the classroom will enable me to be a successful superintendent of education. Every decision I make as superintendent of education must benefit our students, teachers and families.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

Yes, I was the Democratic nominee for superintendent of education in the 2022 election. I received the highest statewide vote total of any Democratic candidate in the 2022 elections with over 720,000 votes.

### Current job/profession:

Director of student activities at Blythewood High School

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I am qualified for this office because I have been an educator for over 25 years and understand how statewide policies affect teachers on the ground. In 2018, I founded the SCforEd movement, which led to a rally of over 10,000 educators at the Statehouse the following year. That experience showed me that there are teachers across the state who are seeking change. I will do all I can to earn your vote in 2026, as I did in 2022, and to be a leader for all our children.

### What do you see as the top challenges/concerns in South Carolina's public schools (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

On teacher retention, we must continue to address teacher pay, while also being cognizant of other factors that contribute to teachers' overall workloads. For example, teachers must be given time to plan and prepare during the instructional day. When

teachers are required to give up instructional time, such as covering another class, they sacrifice the time they dedicate to planning their own classes. As superintendent, I would address this issue by mandating that teachers be appropriately compensated for any missed planning time during the instructional day. Addressing issues like this that contribute to overall teacher dissatisfaction will help encourage more teachers to stay in the profession.

In recent years, we have seen an alarming rise in efforts to censor curricula. Many of these efforts have impacted the availability of certain books in school libraries. As superintendent, I will work to restore trust in our school librarians in doing what is best for their students. I would immediately repeal Regulation 43-170 and restore book-reviewing authority to the local level.

School safety is also an important priority of mine. As an educator who has dealt with school shooting threats, I understand how distressing these incidents can be for everyone involved. As superintendent, I would work closely with the General Assembly to ensure that school safety measures are fully funded.

### What successes have you seen in South Carolina's public schools that you want to build on?

A recent success I have seen in South Carolina's public schools is the work underway to raise teacher pay. This is an important issue for the state because it contributes to our overall ability to attract educators. While positive change has been made to increase teacher salaries, there is still work to be done. In addition to raising starting teacher salaries, we cannot forget about raising the salaries of veteran teachers. Overall, it is important to note that our public schools are doing fantastic work for our students with the resources they have. If we expect further progress, we must fully fund our districts, something that hasn't been done for nearly 20 years.

### Are you actively involved in your community? How so?

Beyond my position as director of student activities at Blythewood High School, I work as an adjunct professor at the College of Charleston where my courses focus on how teachers can advocate for their communities. Outside of work, my personal hobbies include learning to play the ukulele, playing mahjong and attending shows at the Koger Center.



**SYLVIA WRIGHT**  
DEMOCRAT

### Why are you running?

I am running because South Carolina's students deserve a superintendent who has actually stood in their classroom, and I have.

I spent more than 20 years in public schools as a classroom teacher and leader. I have seen firsthand what our students need, what our teachers deserve and what leadership from this office should look like. South Carolina currently ranks 43rd in the nation in education. One in three of our fourth-graders cannot read at grade level. Our teachers are leaving. Our rural schools are underfunded. And the students who have been left furthest behind — children of color, children in poverty, children in rural counties — continue to fall further behind.

I am not running to manage the status quo. I am running to change it. South Carolina cannot afford another term of leadership from someone who has never led a school. I have. And I am ready to lead this one.

### Have you run for political office before? If so, explain:

This is my first campaign for elected office. Throughout my career, my focus has been on serving inside the system — in classrooms, in schools and in district leadership — rather than seeking office. I have dedicated more than two decades to South Carolina's public schools, and I am now stepping forward because I believe the moment calls for an educator with real experience, not a career politician.

### Current job/profession:

I was a district coordinator for Dorchester School District 4 (St. George), but I resigned to campaign full time because I am committed to winning and elevating public education in S.C.

### What makes you qualified for the seat?

I am the only candidate in this race who has taught in a South Carolina classroom and held leadership positions at the school level and district level. I am also a military wife, so I have taught in different states and school settings. I bring a global perspective to the position and to the agency. These are not talking points but relevant qualifications for this office.

— 20-plus years of experience in S.C. public

schools as a classroom teacher and school principal

— Firsthand experience with literacy instruction, curriculum development and school operations

— Direct experience navigating the funding challenges, teacher shortages and community needs that define the state's public education landscape

— Deep roots in South Carolina — born here, educated here and committed to this state's students for my entire career

— A clear, specific, data-backed platform for improving literacy, teacher pay, rural school equity and school safety

I also bring something no policy paper can teach: I know what it feels like to have a classroom full of students counting on me. Every decision I make as superintendent will be filtered through that experience.

### What do you see as the top challenges/concerns in South Carolina's public schools (up to 3), and how do you intend to improve them?

Challenge 1: The literacy crisis: One in three S.C. fourth-graders cannot read at grade level. I will mandate evidence-based, phonics-first reading instruction in every K-3 classroom by 2027 and place reading coaches in the lowest-performing schools. It's important that students are reading by third grade, but the focus cannot stop there. We have to continue to build on the foundation through progress monitoring with enrichment and intervention through eighth grade and expand access to summer programs in every county. I will also include an emphasis on elementary students with special needs as they need foundational braille and/or sign language to also build their reading and comprehension levels. I will also create a public Literacy Progress Dashboard so parents can track results.

Challenge 2: The teacher shortage: South Carolina is losing educators faster than we can replace them. Hundreds of classrooms have no fully licensed teacher right now. I will fight for a \$60,000 minimum starting salary floor, launch a homegrown teacher pipeline through our state universities, technical colleges and HBCUs and cut the administrative burden that is driving our best teachers out. Retaining one experienced teacher saves a district \$20,000 to \$30,000 compared to replacement. Investing in teachers is the fiscally responsible choice.

Challenge 3: Inequitable school funding: South Carolina's funding formula sends the fewest

SEE **SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION,**

PAGE A28

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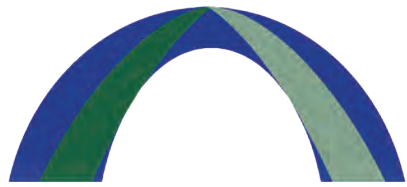
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Make sure you have one of the following photo IDs: SC driver's license, SC DMV ID card, SC voter registration card with photo, federal military ID, Concealed Weapons Permit, Temporary Identification Certificate or US Passport.

If you do not have one of the photo IDs, make your voting experience fast and easy by getting a free one from the

DMV or your county elections office. If you forget to bring your photo ID to the polling place, you can vote a provisional ballot that will count only if you show your photo ID to the county elections office before the certification of the election (on Friday after the Statewide Primaries).

If you can't get a photo ID, remember to bring your non-photo voter registration card with you to the polling place. You may vote a provisional ballot after signing an affidavit stating you have a reasonable impediment to obtaining a photo ID.

Source: S.C. Votes

## SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION FROM PAGE A26

resources to children with the greatest needs. Property tax-based funding means Allendale County schools operate on a fraction of what Lexington County schools receive. I will champion a weighted student funding model that follows the child, and I will aggressively pursue federal dollars that South Carolina has consistently left on the table. A child's zip code should not determine their educational opportunity.

**What successes have you seen in South Carolina's public schools that you want to build on?**

Our challenges do not erase our successes; instead, they exist alongside them, and the best path forward builds on what is already working.

— Our dedicated educators: Despite low pay and high demands, thousands of extraordinary S.C. teachers and principals show up every day and

produce results in the most challenging conditions. I want to build on their commitment by finally giving them the compensation, support and respect they deserve.

— The SC Read to Succeed Act: South Carolina took an important step with Read to Succeed, which established a framework for literacy improvement. As superintendent, I will fully fund it, strengthen it with a phonics-first mandate and hold every district accountable for implementing it with fidelity. I will also eliminate the third-grade retention mandate and focus on growth development initiatives.

— Career and technical education (CTE) programs: South Carolina has strong CTE infrastructure connecting students to real careers in manufacturing, health care and technology. I will expand access in rural and Title I schools, where students have the most to gain and currently the least access.

**Are you actively involved in your community? How so?**

Yes, community involvement is not something I do on the side. It is central to who I am.

Throughout my career, I have been deeply embedded in the communities where I taught and led schools, working with parents, faith leaders, local businesses and civic organizations to support students both inside and outside the classroom. I believe a school is the center of its community, and a superintendent who is not connected to communities cannot serve them effectively.

As I campaign for superintendent, I am conducting a statewide listening tour, visiting communities across South Carolina from the Upstate to the Lowcountry because you cannot lead what you do not understand, and you cannot understand a community unless you sit down with the people in it.



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# It's warming up out there, but there are still festivals, events happening

Celebrate the legacy and contributions of the African American cowboys and frontiersmen at **Black Cowboy Festival and Rodeo** Thursday-Sunday, May 21-24, at Greenfield Farm, 4585 Spencer Road, Rembert. Enjoy agricultural workshops, a fish fry and Western dinner, trail rides, horse shows, line dance, live entertainment, vendor booths and of course a rodeo.

Temple Sinai Jewish History Center, 11 Church St., welcomes the public to **If the Windows Could Talk: Children's Bible Stories** Series from 1:30 to 2:15 p.m. on the following dates: June 6, David the Shepherd; Aug. 1, The Burning Bush (featuring Moses); and Sept. 5, The 10 Commandments (featuring Moses). The series "is designed to be a fun experience for your children to hear the stories associated with Temple Sinai's beautiful and historic stained glass windows."

Learn about our county's namesake and other Revolutionary War figures during a free event at Sumter Museum. **"Backcountry War: The Rise of**

**Francis Marion, Banastre Tarleton, and Thomas Sumter"** by writer, editor and land conservationist Andrew Waters was a finalist for the 2025 American Battlefield Trust Prize for History, and Waters will visit the museum to talk about Gen. Thomas Sumter and others who served during the war. Books on Broad will be on site with books available for purchase and signing. Light refreshments will be provided. The talk will be Thursday, June 4, at 6:30 p.m. at 122 N. Washington St.

Get up close to vehicles in our community that keep us safe during severe weather and emergencies at **Touch A Truck: Storm Readiness** in Sumter County from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, June 6, at Sumter County Civic Center, 700 W. Liberty St. This free event for all ages includes numerous activities, face painting, food trucks and interactive experiences designed to help families better understand storm preparedness.

The **2026 Krawlin' For Christ Jeep Show** featuring Jeep vendors, live music, food vendors, RC course, and a



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO

This year's **Touch a Truck** event is Saturday, June 6, at Sumter County Civic Center.

Jeep Show and Shine Competition will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, July 25, at Sumter Civic Center, 700 W. Liberty St. Entry to this indoor and outdoor event is free to the public. All proceeds will benefit St. Jude Children's Hospital. To find out more go to <https://Krawlinforchrist.wixsite.com/my-site-1>. The show and shine registration booth will be open from 8:30 to 11 a.m. the day of the event. Cost to register your Jeep is \$20, all proceeds will go to St. Jude Children's Hospital. There will

be raffles. No alcohol allowed.

**Fourth Fridays Concert Series** returns with country singer Cody Webb at 6:30 pm. Friday, June 26, on the grounds of the Sumter County Courthouse, 141 N. Main St.

The **Lizard Man Stomp** has become Bishopville and Lee County's annual festival in recent years, and this year it's being held Saturday, June 27, in downtown Bishopville. Meet the famous reptile, enjoy live music and dancing, arts and crafts, kids' games, face painting, a local car show, vendors and food trucks. You can even go home with a Lizard Man statue or a T-shirt (or both). Festival hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and the family-friendly event will begin with a parade down Main Street.

Sumter Chapters of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity have teamed up with Sumter County Library for a new reading program. Join the group on the first Saturday of every month for **Alpha Reads**, starting at 11 a.m. Sumter County Library is at 111 N. Harvin St.



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# Slow-cooked, sticky-glazed pork ribs go with cucumber slaw

BY SAM WAY

Voracious

Sam Way's got a recipe for slow-cooked, sticky-glaze pork ribs with cucumber slaw in his cookbook, "Sam's Eats." The recipe is part of the "Quick Prep, Slow Cook" chapter. It focuses on meals that require minimal preparation but cook over an extended period. The pork ribs are marinated overnight with olive oil, red wine vinegar, honey, smoked paprika, garlic powder and a crumbled stock cube for added flavor. After slow-cooking in the oven, the ribs are broiled with reduced juices for a sticky glaze. They're served with a cucumber slaw. Way says the dish is perfect for impressing guests with minimal effort.

Slow-cooked pork ribs, grilled with a sticky glaze ... you just can't beat it! The idea behind these recipes is that they take very little time to prepare, but are left to cook for an extended period. This is one of my favorite



DAVID LOFTUS / VORACIOUS VIA AP

This image released by Voracious shows a recipe for Pork Ribs with Cucumber Slaw from the cookbook "Sam's Eats" by Sam Way.

ways to cook, as it requires little effort to create a stunning meal. Making these pork ribs for lots of people is a fail-safe way to impress.

A little trick is to crumble a stock cube into the marinade — this is a

quick and easy way to add depth and rich, umami flavor.

## PORK RIBS WITH CUCUMBER SLAW

**Servings:** 3 to 4 as a main, 4 to 6 as part of a spread

### Ingredients

#### For the ribs:

3 tablespoons olive oil  
5 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
6 tablespoons honey  
2 tablespoons smoked paprika  
2 teaspoons garlic powder  
1 chicken or vegetable stock cube, crumbled  
2 pounds, 10 ounces individual pork ribs (each one 3 to 5 ½ ounces)

#### For the cucumber slaw:

2 cucumbers, halved, deseeded, julienned  
2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar  
1 garlic clove, crushed  
1 teaspoon dried chili flakes

Mix the marinade ingredients together in a bowl, seasoning with sea salt and freshly

ground black pepper. Pour the marinade over the ribs and leave to marinate in the fridge overnight, or at least a few hours.

When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 325°F.

Place the ribs in a baking dish or on a sheet pan, pour 1 cup of water into the base of the tray and tightly cover the tray with foil. Cook in the oven for 2 hours, until tender.

Meanwhile, mix the slaw ingredients together in a bowl, season with sea salt, then cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Remove the ribs from the oven and lay them in a new dish or pan (or clean the first one), pouring the juices into a small saucepan. Place the saucepan of juice over a high heat and reduce until thickened.

Preheat the broiler to high, then brush the ribs with some of the reduced juices. Cook under the broiler for 4 to 5 minutes until slightly charred on top then remove them from the oven.

Brush the ribs once more time with the reduced juices, then serve with the cucumber slaw.

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# Love over hate



Inspirational speaker and award-winning author Chris Singleton speaks Thursday, May 7, at Sumter Mayor's Prayer Breakfast at Alice Drive Baptist Church. Singleton is a former professional baseball player who lost his mother in the 2015 racially motivated mass shooting in Charleston. After that, Singleton became an inspirational speaker to share a message of "unity and racial reconciliation" with people and companies across the country.

PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM



ABOVE: Sumter native and "American Idol" finalist Tianna Roberts sings "The Lord's Prayer" to close the breakfast May 7.

LEFT: City of Sumter Mayor David Merchant and his wife, Laurie, open the program and welcome the crowd of 408 attendees at the longstanding annual breakfast in Sumter.

PHOTO PROVIDED

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# REFLECTIONS

## Sumter Iris Festival sponsors Queen for a Day winner

This issue of Reflections revisits the years 1948-49 when the Iris Festival invited contestants from the Queen for a Day Program held in California to participate in Sumter's festival. In order for the local event to obtain national media coverage, T. Douglas Youngblood, owner and manager of radio station WFIG (World Famous Iris Gardens), convinced the producers of the popular radio program

Queen for a Day to allow their selection to come to Sumter and participate in the festival activities. Information and photos were attained from *The Item* archives, the writings of Mike Karvelas and personal interviews.

Youngblood noted that by having the "Queen" and her



**Sammy Way**  
REFLECTIONS

spouse participate in the celebration, Sumter would gain exposure over the Mutual Broadcasting System involving some 500 radio stations throughout the country. As the festival grew in stature and cultural significance, it attracted numerous political figures including governors and possibly Hollywood personalities. Youngblood said the queen and her escort would be flown from Hollywood to Columbia via Delta Airlines and arrive in the capital city on May 26.

Stella Benninger of Los Angeles, California, was chosen as the "Queen for a Day" on the radio program of the same name. She would be flown to Sumter to participate in the South's most colorful festival – The Iris Festival – to be held May 27, 1948. Benninger was one of four contestants competing for the coveted title on the half-hour Mutual Network program. Listeners throughout the nation heard the contestant nominated by the Grand Council and chosen by the applause of the studio audience at Earl Carroll's Theater Restaurant in Hollywood. Columbia arranged for city and state officials to meet the contestant at the Columbia airport with photographers on hand to record the arrival. Ar-



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO

The Queen for a Day visited Sumter for the Iris Festival in 1948, seen center right. At far right is T. Douglas Youngblood.

rangements were made for a private plane to fly the queen and her party to Sumter. Following her arrival, the Queen and her companion were the guests of Mayor and Mrs. Edwin Boyle during their stay until May 30.

Following the Queen's arrival, a lavish entertainment schedule awaited the visitors during their stay in Sumter and surrounding areas. The Queen later appeared in the Iris Festival Parade on a special float. The parade was expected to be over a mile long with many beautiful floats, a minimum of five marching bands and several Army and Air Force units from Shaw Air Force Base and other bases from across the state. The parade was scheduled to begin at 3:30 p.m. with jet planes flying overhead during the procession, which was scheduled to start at the overhead bridge on South Main Street. It was then to proceed up Main to Calhoun and from there to Washington and finally to Lib-

erty Street where it was to disperse. The Queen and her escorts, consisting of a number of Sumter Garden Club members, proceeded to the Dunnedell Gardens and Swan Lake Iris Gardens to inspect these two noted beautiful attractions.

At the scheduled Elks' luncheon, Gov. J. Strom Thurmond, Mayor and Mrs. Boyle, city and county officials, Chamber of Commerce representatives, the Festival Steering Committee and visiting ladies including their escorts greeted the Queen. That evening a coronation ball, featuring the Woody Woodward orchestra, was held at the National Guard Armory. It was at this function that "The Iris Queen" was selected by the Queen for a Day from among 15 young ladies representing various cities across the state.

The following day, the queen and her escorts, including local representatives, and the newly crowned Queen Iris, mo-

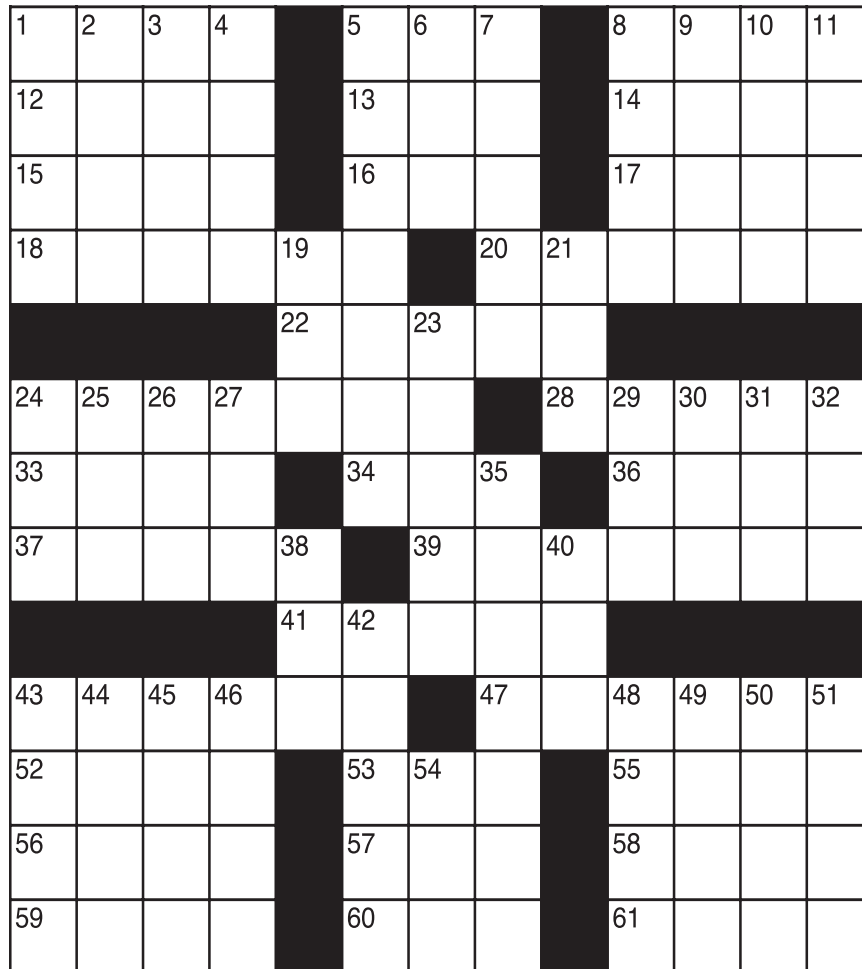
tored to Charleston for a tour of the historic city and a luncheon. The group then ventured to Myrtle Beach where lodging and a dance were scheduled at the Ocean Forest Hotel, a well-known Atlantic Seaboard hotel. The following day the queen and her escort were driven to Columbia; after arrival, they embarked for Hollywood on Delta flight 311.

The hosting of the Queen for a Day from Hollywood was declared a success by city and county officials, the Sumter Chamber of Commerce and business and industrial organizations. The parade and the Iris Festival garnered record crowds to the city, and visitors to the Iris Gardens and Dunnedell Gardens exceeded all expectations. The Festival Planning Committee decided to make this attraction an annual event and invite the selected "Queen for a Day" to Sumter and involve her in the 1949 Iris Festival festivities.

## CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

1. Back talk
5. Wise bird
8. Land amid water
12. Cattle
13. Feather scarf
14. Approve
15. Dog's bane
16. Lawn material
17. Measure with a stopwatch
18. Shrine
20. Temporary replacement
22. Did wrong
24. Merry
28. Fools
33. Elaborate solo
34. Lamb's mom
36. Seven days
37. Synagogue official
39. Aged
41. Advocate Ralph \_\_\_\_\_
43. Spaces on a form
47. Recurring series
52. Earring's location
53. Preschooler
55. Rich deposit
56. Flirty look
57. Animosity
58. Insist upon
59. Having foot digits
60. Cherry color
61. Lived



### DOWN

1. Not hard
2. Pivot
3. Look like
4. Clothing fastener
5. Examine
6. Romance
7. Scoop
8. Small bit
9. Body covering
10. Weak, as an excuse
11. Goggles
19. Waikiki wreath
21. Kooky
23. Marry again
24. Not near
25. Distinct span
26. Bro or sis
27. Check
29. Be in arrears

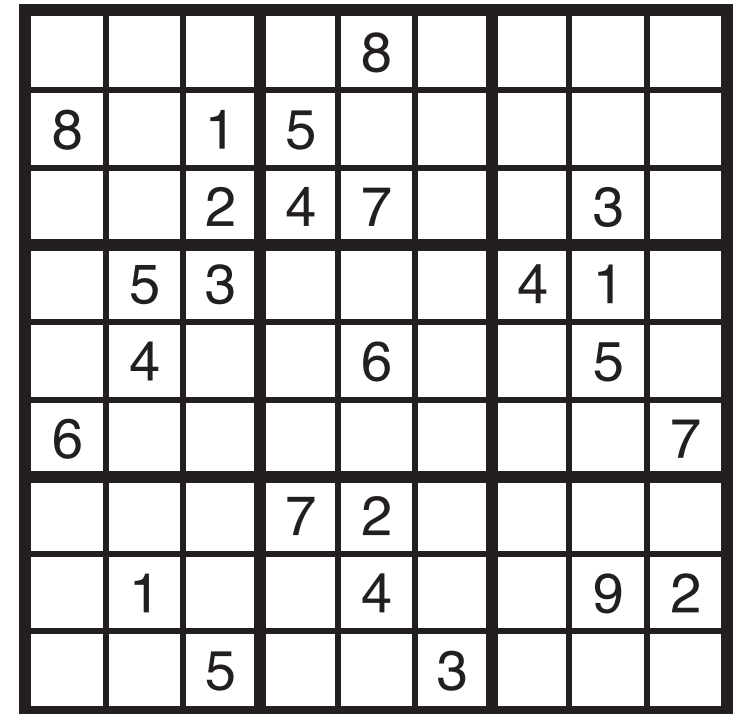
30. Miles \_\_\_\_\_ hour
31. Electric fish
32. Earth's upper atmosphere
35. Put into office
38. Printing fluid
40. Parched
42. Out of bed
43. Blemish
44. Advertising symbol
45. Adept
46. Destitution
48. Members-only group
49. Folk tales
50. Brink
51. Caught sight of
54. Mine deposit

**SOLUTION**



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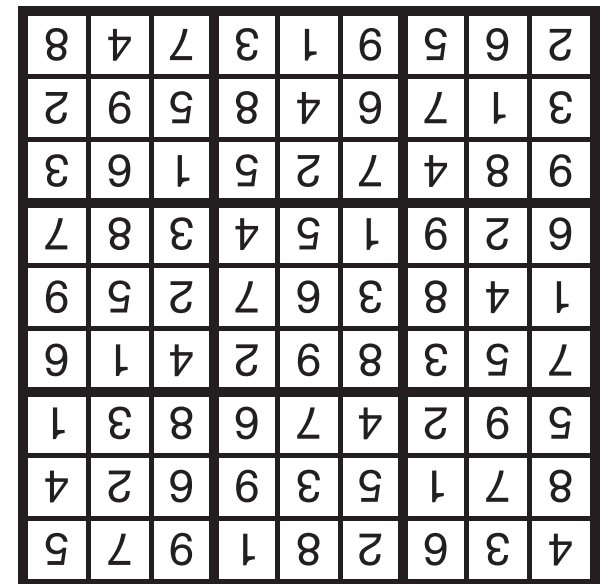
## SUDOKU



### HOW TO PLAY:

Fill the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once. Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: you must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column or 3x3 box.

**SOLUTION**



# Sudoku 6x6

□	△		◇		
	◇			□	△
+		△			
				+	×
×		○		△	
			+		

**COMPLETE EACH GRID WITH THESE SIX SYMBOLS.** Symbols can only appear once in each line, once in each column and once in each box of six squares. Each box of six squares is marked by darker lines. Some symbols are already included in each box to help you get started. Don't forget: a symbol can't be repeated in the same line, column or box.

○	×	+	◇	□	▽
◇	▽	□	○	+	×
×	+	▽	□	○	◇
□	◇	○	▽	×	+
▽	□	×	+	◇	○
+	○	◇	×	▽	□

ANSWER

# KID ZONE

## What exactly are the Nobel Prizes?

Have you ever heard of the Nobel Prizes? Basically, they're very important awards that certain people receive when they've done something truly extraordinary to make the world a better place.

The Nobel Prizes have been around since 1901. Every year, they're awarded to individuals or organizations that make outstanding contributions in different fields. There are Nobel Prizes for peace, chemistry, physics, medicine, economics and literature.

### The inventor

A Swedish inventor named Alfred Nobel created the Nobel Prizes. He invented many things during his lifetime, including dynamite. He earned a lot of money from his hundreds of inventions. Before he died, he decided to use a large part of his fortune to establish prizes that would reward people who do the most good for humanity.

### The rewards

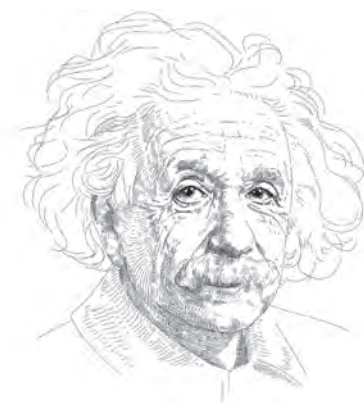
Nobel Prizes are highly coveted around the

world. In fact, each person who wins one receives three things:

1. A prestigious diploma
2. A gold medal
3. A large sum of money

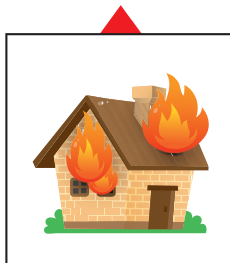
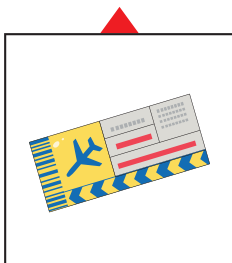
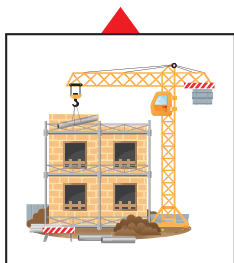
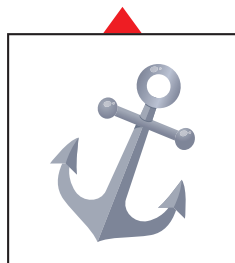
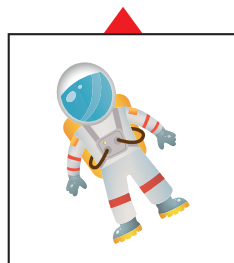
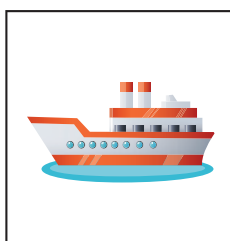
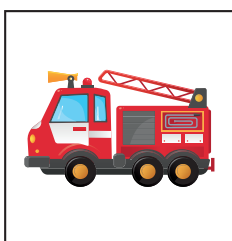
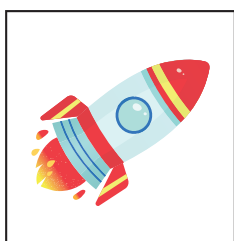
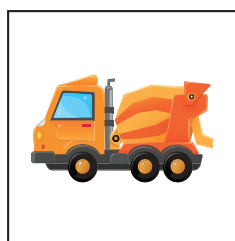
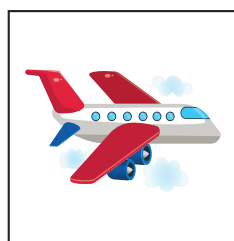
Since the prizes were created, more than 400 Americans have become Nobel Prize winners in different categories. Do you want to express yourself and make a difference to create a better world in the future? If you work and study hard, maybe one day your name will be on the list of winners of these famous prizes.

Some of the most famous Nobel Prize winners include Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Bob Dylan, Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders.



## Together is better

Connect the images that go together



ANSWER:

## Religion

# Love > hate

There are days in our lives that we will never forget. If you have accomplished a significant goal in life, graduating from high school or college are good examples, you will never forget that day. If you are married, your wedding day and the joy that you felt are etched in your memory. If you have had children, you will never forget that feeling when you saw your child for the first



**Pastor Stewart Rawson**

time. These are joyous memories that serve as encouragement throughout our lives.

There are days that we will never forget because they are tragic. Anyone alive on Sept. 11, 2001, will never forget where they were or what they were

doing when they heard that our country was under attack. I grew up with my parents recounting what they remembered from the day that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. My hope is that no one will ever forget the tragedy that occurred on June 17, 2015, in Charleston, South Carolina. That was the day that a hate-filled young man went to a Bible study at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, the oldest African American church in the South. The young man (I resist writing his name) sat through the Bible study that evening, and when he stood and started asking questions, he also began a horrific shooting spree that left nine people dead. Later at trial he said that he intended to start a "race war," and he has never apologized for the atrocities he committed. Someone is quoted as saying that he did say, "I am not sure I would do it again because everyone has been so nice to me."

Chris Singleton was 18 years old at the time and he lost his mother, the Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, in the massacre. Chris was the keynote

speaker on May 7, 2026, at the annual Sumter Mayor's Prayer Breakfast that took place at Alice Drive Baptist Church. The Mayor's Prayer Breakfast is an annual event that brings the Sumter community together to pray for our community. At the time of his mother's murder, Chris was a college baseball star who would later sign with the Chicago Cubs. Today he is an author and a nationally in-demand speaker who shares his profound message of love and forgiveness. Singleton says that his mother's killer wanted to start a race war, but his goal is profoundly different. His desire is to change the world by sharing his story and witnessing to how he forgave his mother's killer. He passionately proclaims that "love will always conquer hate." When he signs books at his speaking engagements he delivers an impressive signature and then includes his unique "love > hate."

During his testimony, Singleton asked everyone in the audience to clap twice on his count of three (he made us do it a few times because he said we were off the beat!). The point of this

exercise, he observed, is to show that we are united. One of his foundational beliefs is that we don't have to listen to the same music, or vote for the same political candidates, but we do have to love each other. Again, he asked for audience participation, and he asked us to stand up and hug someone different than we were and to tell them that we loved them. You could feel the gathering of several hundred people come together in a spirit of profound unity.

Throughout Singleton's dramatic message I was thinking to myself, "could I do this?" Could I forgive my mother's killer? Could I take an unimaginably tragic event and transform it into something not only good, but also world changing? Chris Singleton not only can, but he does. I am grateful that I had the privilege of hearing Chris Singleton's powerful story. Love really is more powerful than hate and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never overcome it.

*The Rev. Dr. Stewart Rawson is the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Sumter.*



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## Entertainment

## ‘Michael’ celebrates the artistry of the star

The innovative artistry, career and life of Michael Jackson spanning from 5 years old to his untimely and

tragic passing at 50 years old could easily bridge into two to three films. Attempting to include every aspect of his musical accomplishments and personal life into a two-hour



A REVIEW BY  
ISAIAH RIDLEY

feature is not a realistic perspective.

Before and during its initial release, word of mouth from online outlets attempted to derail the momentum of “Michael” by placing myriad negative connotations and obstacles in its path. Given it is the first theatrical release for a Michael Jackson biographical feature, there were questions about how it was going to address certain aspects of his life and whether it would focus on allegations, innuendos and scandals. I must admit that I was expressing inner concern as I, myself, was not sure how the audience was going to receive a Jackson film in theatrical format. I was born in 1981, Michael mania was reaching the stratosphere at that point, and it did not take long before the explosion occurred. Every news outlet, music channel and radio station played his music on regular rotation. He was everywhere with no means of escape. Today’s generation will never know nor understand exactly how famous Jackson was. I am proud to say I experienced the era of Jackson, including witnessing him live in concert.

Director Antoine Fuqua undertook an impossible task of bringing a story focusing on the most famous and greatest entertainer of all time to life. Collaborating with the Jackson fami-



GLEN WILSON / LIONSGATE VIA AP

This image released by Lionsgate shows Jaafar Jackson as Michael Jackson in a scene from “Michael.”

ly, this film came to fruition. It only made sense casting a blood relative to portray the role. Jaafar Jackson, the son of Jermaine Jackson, embraced the challenge of portraying his late uncle. Casting any other actor would not have worked. Michael Jackson had a unique aura, a mysteriousness, an electric charisma that not anyone can simply exude. The film is an exploration into the beginnings of Michael during the era of the Jackson Five before exploding into the global iconic phenomenon that captivated fans of all races, both genders, all religions and preferences alike.

Beginning from the humble roots of Gary, Indiana, the Jackson brothers were pushed by a domineering, intimidating and goal-driven father in Joseph Jackson, portrayed by Colman Domingo. Joseph’s intense energy, with his iron fist of discipline, shaped and molded Michael into reaching a mythical level of determination and perfection. “Michael” is also an examination of the relationship between Michael and Joseph. Fans of Michael Jackson are aware of the sentiments Michael shared about Joseph in past interviews. There are aspects of his

life touched upon such as physical and emotional abuse by the hands of Joseph, his willingness to break out on his own, battling preliminary stages of vitiligo and the Pepsi commercial accident that forever changed his life.

The film is cleverly paced to the point of the story, never becoming bogged down by unnecessary intricate details, and not once did I feel the need to look at my phone, never did the concept of boredom set in, and from beginning to end, it was an exciting, sincere experience. Jaafar Jackson’s performance as his uncle Michael is 100% immaculate. It is obvious why they chose a blood relative for this role. No one else would have come remotely close to what Jaafar accomplished. He poured every aspect of his physical being into capturing the complete essence of Michael. Everything from mannerisms to body language and the voice was spot on. If Jaafar does not receive a nomination or, worse yet, does not win an Academy Award for his performance, the feeling of shock would be total understatement. Moments with his singing and dancing I found myself reacting

internally saying, “Wow, he did that spin and moonwalk better than Michael. How is that possible?” There are scenes where he is speaking, laughing or becoming emotional, resulting in me questioning if I was watching Jaafar or Michael.

Domingo’s performance as Joseph Jackson opened my eyes in a way I was not expecting. He looked and sounded like him, like how Jaafar sounded like Michael. The way he intentionally disappeared into focusing on determination and forceful behavior added an intimidating presence that even made me afraid of him. Every scene shared between Jaafar and Domingo had the appropriate electric intensity. As a member of the audience, you could truly feel the amount of fear instilled within Michael.

I can say without hesitation this film was a much-needed breath of fresh air celebrating the music, magic, innovation and creativity of Michael Jackson. Watching Jaafar’s paying tribute to his uncle performing “Thriller,” the iconic Motown 25 performance of “Billie Jean”, “Human Nature” during the Victory Tour and the final concert sequence during the “Bad” tour was breathtaking. Hearing the audience sing and tap their feet, watching them move their heads with the beat, people getting up and dancing made for an exciting theatrical experience. It was quite simply the most fun I have had in a theater, and this comes from my personal experience witnessing the King of Pop live during his Dangerous World Tour in 1992.

“Michael” is a great film for families, friends, strangers and atmosphere during the story I cannot fully articulate in words. The best way to describe the feeling is how it successfully brings everyone together for the purpose of celebrating Michael Jackson the way he deserves and earned. I give “Michael” a resounding 10/10 and two thumbs up. Highly recommended, and I intend to have repeat viewings.

To watch Isaiah Ridley’s movie reviews online, find him @Izzy’s Cinematic Escape on YouTube.