

Hello everyone. My name is Neal Collins.

First of all, I would like to thank my family, friends, and supporters for coming out today. I have been touched by the encouragement and pledges of support even up to this point where I stand today. I would like to thank Michael Hedrick and Michael's Pizzeria for providing this backdrop, one in which I hope conveys that small businesses will be key in my campaign.

Today is July 4th, the day we celebrate our country's founding and the Declaration of Independence. I can think of no better day than today to announce my candidacy in the Republican primary of South Carolina's Third Congressional District of the United States House of Representatives.

A little bit about me. My name is Neal Collins. I was born here in Easley. My parents worked in textiles for most of my formative life. We lived a modest life and traveled where the jobs were, which took us to at least five states over four years. Then, my stepdad, Skeeter Clardy, trained himself to become a locksmith. We returned to Easley and I graduated from Easley High School. I then went up the street to Furman University where I majored in political science and French. I attended the University of South Carolina School of Law. After graduating, I accepted a job in Charlotte and worked there for two years before returning home.

So, why return home, why am I running, and why now? First, my parents raised me to be involved in the community. Whether it was school, church, Scouts, or other volunteer opportunities, I was encouraged to become involved. Second and follow me on this, I'm running because I rode a school bus while growing up. I rode a school bus because both parents had to work. You see, the school bus allowed me to travel through varying neighborhoods – from mobile home subdivisions to rural ranch houses to wealthy neighborhoods to government housing to apartment complexes. At some point in that journey, on one of those rides, I vowed that not only would I improve my life and that of my family's but that I would return and improve the lives of those in my community and those in those varying neighborhoods. Why now? Simply put, I believe in the urgency of now. The policies of today most affect those of tomorrow. I believe the leaders of tomorrow should begin to step up and provide direction.

So, what are my issues? My campaign will focus on (1) Responsibility, (2) Recovery, and (3) Reform. First, Responsibility ... I will approach each and every issue with two fundamental questions – first, what role does personal responsibility play in this matter? Two, is it fiscally responsible. You see, I believe government begins with the individual, it then expands to the family, to the church/community, then to the local government, the state government, and finally the national government. Our nation and its leaders have this in reverse. They believe we address issues with the national government first and finally and only last do they ask what can the individual do. Regardless of the issue, we must ask what is the duty and capability of the individual. Second, we must ask as a nation, can we afford this? We ask this as a family and we ask this as a business. Michaels Pizzeria has to meet its bills each month, why doesn't our federal government?

We have a national debt over \$11 trillion, increasing \$4 billion a day, that's approximately \$40,000 for each man, woman, and child in America! Not only is this illogical and unsustainable, but I believe it is an unconstitutional taking of future generations and a taxation without representation. You see, future generations will pay and our children and our grandchildren have no say in the matter for our current indiscretions. We are currently paying for previous generations' past indiscretions. We must stop this cycle. I pledge that I will never vote for a budget that is not balanced, whether it is a Democratic or Republican budget.

(1) Responsibility ... (2) Recovery. I believe education and unemployment are South Carolina's two primary concerns and are linked. We decrease our unemployment by educating our people, recruiting businesses, and lowering taxes on small businesses. I believe the federal government should be limited to national defense, infrastructure, transportation, education, and providing a social safety net. In regards to education, I believe it is primarily of family and local concern, but the federal government has the ability to support our higher educational institutions, promote creative reforms, and allow individuals to rise to their highest potential. South Carolina's unemployment rate is over 12%, two points higher than the national avg. and third highest in the nation. Pickens County's unemployment is over 10%, Greenwood County's is over 14%, and McCormick's is over 17%! This should not be, we have hard-working, blue collar citizens and our public servants should be highlighting this and recruiting businesses to our district. To support small businesses and maintain jobs we do have, we should encourage lower taxes and maintain the employer-based tax exemptions for healthcare. Michael's Pizzeria is a great example of small businesses in the community. It has been in Easley for 11 years and currently employs 30 people. This is what our foundation is and this is what should be promoted.

(1) Responsibility ... (2) Recovery (3) Reform. I believe a public official should have the political courage to not only discuss reform, but to offer his or her plan of reform. Here is not the appropriate setting, but my candidacy will be unique in that I will not only give you bullet points, but I will give you ... substantive stances. For those issues, please check out me website, nealcollins.com, to be launched on July 15.

I pledge to you that I will not be the typical candidate. I believe politics is a noble profession that can effect great change. My frustration is when politicians are irresponsible, illogical, and lack political courage to offer their plan and views.

I pledge to be a candidate with political courage to confront both the issues of today and tomorrow with a set of unwavering principles and with an independent mind.

If you believe the system needs principles, I am your candidate. If you believe in personal and fiscal responsibility, I am your candidate. If you believe the system needs fresh ideas, I am your candidate. If you believe that a public servant should have the best interests of the community at heart, a love of the community and a passion for public service, I am your candidate. If you believe that the nation will recover and the best is yet to come, I am your candidate.

Again, I thank you for your time. Please remember Neal Collins, Republican for U.S. House.