

# District 14 - Election Q&A (Cont'd from page 1)

**McDaniel:** I will make it a priority to pass comprehensive, meaningful ethics reform and restore trust in government. On county council, I have a record of transparency and will continue to be a representative that you can trust in Columbia.

First, we need to put an end to "dark money" and require groups donating to campaigns to reveal their donors. This has been and continues to fuel corruption in politics. Those seeking to influence elections and gain favor at the SC State House through loopholes must be stopped. We've seen not only private groups paying for influence, but also government officials lining the pockets of their friends with taxpayer money in exchange for contracts and jobs.

I will fight to reform the redistricting process, end partisan gerrymandering, raise the bar on transparency, and abolish the self-policing legislative ethics committees. Accountability and transparency demand a fully independent ethics panel to investigate complaints against members of the legislature.

**Jones:** I would support tougher ethics legislation and penalties for legislators that violate state ethics laws. As a member of the Laurens County council since January 2015, I have worked to make government more transparent and accountable.

Through phone/data audits, credit card audits and a complete overhaul of the counties funds, I was able to save taxpayers money and bring sound budget practices and fiscal stability to our local government. With these experiences, I am uniquely qualified to help make the state of South Carolina more open and transparent to you. Greater transparency of government ultimately leads to a more accountable government. Once elected to represent the people of the 14th District, I will continue to be a watchdog for taxpayers who are not afraid to speak up when something is wrong.

**Q: The failed V.C. Sumner nuclear construction project turned into a \$9 billion cautionary tale for South Carolinians. What do you believe should be done at the State House and Governor's mansion to protect consumers and taxpayers from in the future? Do you agree with current plans to sell Santee Cooper, which was partially responsible for the planned reactor?**

**Jones:** The problems with the energy monopoly in South Carolina became apparent to me when a new business moved here from Georgia. The businesses utility and energy costs doubled by moving to South Carolina. The fact is that competition brings down costs and increases quality. South Carolina needs energy competition. The V.C. Sumner debacle happened because legislators voted to allow a state-backed monopoly of the project, leaving ratepayers to foot the bill. This is a classic case of how less government interference and not more, would have actually helped people get more affordable energy. A handful of offers have been made for Santee Cooper, only two of the offers no longer hold ratepayers on the hook for the government failure of the V.C. Sumner plant. We must open up energy competition in South Carolina in order to allow for dependable, competitive and affordable energy.

**McDaniel:** VC Sumner should be sold. The people of SC can't be expected to continue to fund a private business that they are not receiving any benefit from. There is a limited market and not many opportunities to sell nuclear equipment, which makes this issue even

more urgent.

In the future, the General Assembly needs to consider securitization. This would force utilities to issue bonds for the debt that carry lower interest rates and prevent customers from funding shareholder profits. Florida lawmakers have implemented this law; it is expected to save customers over \$700 million. The decision really boils down to do we protect our citizens or private industry.

**Q: Rural areas in regions such as Laurens County often struggle with high-speed internet access. Do you support a move in the State House to create infrastructure for high-speed access in those areas? Why or why not?**

**McDaniel:** Yes. Access to the internet has created a digital divide across the country. It affects healthcare, property values, education, and overall quality of life. Students are unable to complete homework assignments or take online courses, telehealth isn't an option in communities that don't have medical centers, and industries are failing because they can't communicate with customers. 11% of SC's population does not have access to adequate broadband. This is about creating equity and opportunity, not convenience.

**Jones:** Owning an I.T. company, I know the importance of fast, reliable and affordable internet connections. Nationally, South Carolina ranks #28th for the most connected states. The FCC standard for high-speed internet is 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speed. To put it in perspective, you can stream a high definition movie at 1.5 Mbps or greater. Over 85% of the population in Laurens County have access to a 25 Mbps internet connection and over 80% have access to a 100 Mbps internet connection. 90% of South Carolinians have adequately had access to high-speed internet. I would carefully study any proposals that take federal funds for even faster internet connections.

**Q: Public education has been annually short funded by the legislature according to its own formulas in recent years. What should be done, if anything, to fully fund education in South Carolina?**

**Jones:** The most important role model in my life is my mom. She has been a teacher for 39 years. I have seen first hand the struggles that teachers have had to overcome from the political hoops to excessive testing. As a parent of two children in Laurens District 55 schools, I realize that we must empower both parents and teachers to allow for greater opportunities in education. In order to have better schools and opportunities, legislators must get out of way and allow parents and teachers to make the important decisions for students. There is a correlation between freedom and prosperity. I want to ensure that more of the money follows the students. In order to have greater outcomes in education, we must have greater freedom for parents, teachers, and students.

**McDaniel:** Our teachers work 50 plus hours a week to ensure our children have the education they need and deserve. But often have to take second jobs just to make ends meet. Our students are being crammed into classrooms, unable to properly learn.

We fix these issues by prioritizing public education in South Carolina. The funds are available but the General Assembly chooses not to fully fund this critical need. In recent years, the base student cost allocated to SC schools per pupil has been annually reduced by 25%. While metropolitan areas are able to account for this lack of

funding through existent tax revenues, rural communities are forced to raise property taxes to make up the difference.

The current proposal coming from our legislators does provide an increase in pay for teachers; however it takes even more money away from operations funding. This will in turn force a property tax increase locally or cause classrooms to become even more crowded.

District 14 needs an advocate for public education.

**Q: A move to cut the state's 6% sales tax in half has gained some traction in the House. But that would mean charging sales tax on items currently exempt from that tax, including groceries. What is your take on this proposal?**

**McDaniel:** I believe we should cut sales tax in the state. Charging an additional tax on certain goods and services in order to make this work will hurt small businesses in South Carolina, so I would not support the current proposal.

The additional funding needed to make up for sales tax reform should come from industries that choose South Carolina as their home. Most are provided healthy FILOT agreements and can afford to pay their fair share.

**Jones:** Currently, Laurens County is at a disadvantage due to higher than neighboring counties sales taxes, especially on service-related industries such as restaurants. Like many, I'd love to have more choices in retail and restaurants. Higher sales taxes in Laurens County does not help us achieve this goal. Currently, sales taxes are being compounded and another 1% sales will be on the ballot November 2020. That can potentially put restaurants of the municipalities in Laurens County at a 10% sales tax rate. As the Tax Foundation has stated, reducing the state portion of the sales tax on some items from 6% to 3% would give us a competitive edge in a revenue neutral manner. In order to

reduce sales taxes further, we must eliminate wasteful government spending. Ultimately, I will work to give the people more control over their hard earned money.

**Q: In March, a Senate subcommittee passed the Compassionate Care Act, a key step in the process that would legalize medical marijuana. What are your thoughts on legalizing medical marijuana?**

**Jones:** I've heard from many local constituents that they'd like to be able to try alternative medicines including, medical marijuana for everything from disabilities to terminal illness. I believe that they should be able to work with their doctor to decide the best method of treatment without interference from an overbearing government. The Compassionate Care Act will allow patients and doctors to decide if medical marijuana is the right treatment. There are also many agrarian benefits and use cases for cannabis in South Carolina. 23 state currently have legal medicinal marijuana.

**McDaniel:** The legalization of medical marijuana would be beneficial to the state. By allowing doctors to prescribe cannabis as an alternative to highly addictive opioids, it will help those in need of the medication, it provides another option for the state's agricultural industry, adds to our revenue, and we can help stop this tragic epidemic of substance abuse we are seeing in SC and around the US. Furthermore, the government has no right to deny citizens from accessing the medical attention they desperately need.

**Q: As members of county council, you both have expressed frustration over the lack of money allocated - as mandated by law - to the state's local government fund. If elected, what would you do to change that pattern at the state level?**

**McDaniel:** Much like the funding for education, the Local Government Fund formula doesn't need changing; It needs to be funded accordingly.

As your representative, I would fight to fix the rate at which counties and municipalities are funded and fight to prevent further burdensome mandates from being placed on local governments.

**Jones:** Since 2008, the local government fund (money which is returned from the state to local government for state-mandated offices) has been underfunded in Laurens County by an estimated \$7.6 million. The good news is that legislation to almost completely fund the LGF entirely has passed the House could be signed into law very soon. While the underfunding of the LGF has been a difficulty for local government, it is not the only reason that local governments have had a shortfalls in recent years. Many local governments continued to operate business as usual after the recession when they should have cut back and made operations more efficient. Very often government believes it has a revenue problem when it really just has too much government.

## Laurens County District 14 Precincts

Name	Location	Address	City
Laurens 1	Springfield Baptist Church	500 Jersey St	Laurens
Laurens 2	CPW Training Center	215 Church St	Laurens
Laurens 3	The Ridge at Laurens	301 Exchange Dr	Laurens
Laurens 4	Evening Light Church of God	308 S Harper St Ext	Laurens
Laurens 5	Laurens County Library	1017 W Main St	Laurens
Laurens 6	Family YMCA of Greater Laurens	410 Anderson Dr	Laurens
Bailey	Holly Grove Baptist Church	92 Holly Grove Church Rd	Laurens
Trinity Ridge	Chestnut Ridge Baptist Church	499 Chestnut Ridge Rd	Laurens
Wattsville	Ford School	601 Lucas Ave	Laurens
Barksdale-Narnie	Welcome Baptist Church Fellowship Hall	1825 Hwy 14	Laurens
Maddens	New Prospect Baptist Church	4996 Hwy 221 S	Laurens
Mountville	Mountville Fire Dept	424 Mart Teague Rd	Mountville
Jones	Pleasant Grove Baptist Church	1279 S Frontage Rd	Fountain Inn
Owings	Owings Community Center	4719 N Old Laurens rd	Gray Court
Gray Court	Gray Court Town Hall	329 W Main St	Gray Court
Greenpond	Greenpond Volunteer Fire Department	87 Winding Hollow Rd	Fountain Inn
Cross Hill	First Baptist Church of Cross Hill	789 N Main St	Cross Hill
Waterloo	Waterloo Fire Dept	11253 Hwy 221 S	Waterloo
Martins-Poplar Springs	Western Laurens Fire Dept	15406 Indian Mound Rd	Ware Shoals
Ekorn	Union Baptist Church	536 Old Quaker Ch Rd	Laurens
Mt Olive	Mt Olive Community Bldg	8685 Indian Mound Rd	Ware Shoals
Hickory Tavern	Hickory Tavern School	163 Neely Ferry Rd	Gray Court
Princeton	Princeton Baptist Church	18832 Hwy 76 W	Honea Path
Brewerton	Mt Bethel Methodist Church	242 Mt Bethel Church Rd	Ware Shoals

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