

Race for state's 36th House district: Russ McCabe

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Russ McCabe (D-36th District)

Russ McCabe takes the long view of governing. That comes from a 31-year career in state government—specifically, as an archivist and ultimately as the director of the Delaware Public Archives.

“Working in government provides a unique perspective about how government works and doesn’t work well,” said the Democratic candidate for the 36th Representative District. “You get ideas of the inner workings of government and how things could be done differently. I have a depth of knowledge that’s a little different from the ordinary.”

McCabe’s knowledge of Delaware comes from his upbringing in Georgetown as a graduate of Sussex Central High School, and his years as a state historian. With history and geography degrees from Radford University in Virginia, McCabe came to the state archives with a passion for his home state—particularly the history of its people. For 20 years he oversaw the state’s program to install historic markers around the state, doubling the number of them. “We really popularized the program and focused on community history, the stuff that hadn’t gotten much attention: the ethnic and religious history, the education institutions, the deeper levels of community history. I’m very proud of that.”

McCabe believes that his perspective on Delaware’s people and governance will enable him to tackle present-day challenges—for instance, to better allocate funds and reduce government waste and size. One of his first priorities would be to develop a waiver system to allow state agencies to bypass state-centralized purchasing. While working for the state he discovered that many items, like computers, are cheaper on the open market. “We’d save a fortune if we applied [open market purchasing] to state government.”

Curbing wasteful spending provides more capital to invest on education and job creation, McCabe said. “I am interested in doing what is needed to make sure Delawareans are working as efficiently and effectively as we can, cutting the size and cost in government, while dealing with growing needs in education.”

McCabe says that to accomplish these goals he will work both sides of aisle in the legislature. He is especially interested in encouraging bipartisanship on the consequential and thorny task of redistricting, which the General Assembly will tackle next year as a result of the 2010 federal census. McCabe applies the historian’s perspective to the issue.

“There has been quite a bit of growth and change in Delaware. In the past it has become a political boondoggle,” he said. “Redistricting nearly paralyzed the General Assembly 10 years ago. It’s gotta be done right, we have to make it fair, and we have to be very careful that it doesn’t become the divisive issue that it became 10 years ago.”