

VOTE JONATHAN STARLING



It is with great pleasure that I officially announce my candidacy to run as an Independent candidate for Constituency 20 in the forthcoming General Election.

I have decided that I can best serve the constituency and Bermuda by running as an Independent candidate instead of a member of the PLP or the OBA. While I have great respect and many friendships across both party lines, and there are elements of both sides platforms which I support, having looked carefully at what both parties represent and have said, I honestly don't feel that either one really represents my core beliefs, or have indicated a willingness to address the issues which I think are important for Bermuda. As an Independent I am able to bring many of these key issues to the forefront of our political discourse.

Additionally, I believe that while the party system has played, does play, and will play, an important role in our political system, they have both positive and negative consequences. In particular, they all too often stifle independent thought, with candidates muting their own beliefs and consciences in the name of party lines, and out of fear of the party whip. Unfortunately, under the party system, decisions are made based not on what is right for the island, but instead on what is thought to be right for the party electorally, or right according to private sponsors. And often candidates are acting with an eye to their political advancement in terms of promotions from backbencher to minister, and so censor themselves.

As an Independent I am free to voice my opinion and to vote freely. My responsibility is to my constituents only, not to party officers or special interests. I am free to work with all to develop and bring into reality common positions that will be good for my constituents and good for Bermuda. In many ways Independents are ideally suited to bring diversity of opinion into decision-making, and to serve as catalysts for a new politics, one based on consensus and mutual respect.

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There is also an increasing chance that the election will see a hung parliament, or even a minority government, and in such a situation, the role of Independents becomes even more important, having the potential to influence policy even more than normal.

I have a belief that a better Bermuda is possible, and I have a vision for a new politics for the 21st Century, one which is based on a commitment to social, economic and environmental justice, a plurality of political voices and positions, and a politics based on mutual respect, a politics that seeks to build consensus rather than perpetuate the divisions that have haunted us so far.

This election is too important to be reduced to simple arguments about PLP or OBA and the economy. We also need to address key social and environmental issues. We cannot afford to ignore these, and we should go into the election with these issues at the forefront of our minds. Indeed, we must resolve many of these issues if we are to build a new economy that works for all.

I have the experience, the skills, the ideas and the passion to serve Constituency 20 and to serve them well. I can serve as an independent voice for Bermuda, and I look forward to working with colleagues and civil society to build a better Bermuda. The ideas I've put forth, these are ideas which I believe are good for Constituency 20 and good for Bermuda. I look forward to taking them beyond being mere 'good ideas' and into 'good policy'.

My vision of a better Bermuda is of a more just society, a safer society, a healthier, greener and more democratic society. It must be built through nurturing our collective diversity and with a clear commitment to social, economic and environmental justice. While the State can only do so much here, it plays a very important role, one which must be complemented with the changes in the everyday, in how we relate to one another individually, and how we relate to the economy and the environment. As an Independent MP I have the opportunity to effect change in both the State and everyday life.

***I look forward to working for the good people of Constituency 20,
and for the island, as an independent voice for Bermuda!***

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Some platform highlights:

- Enact Workforce Equity Legislation to require all workplaces with more than 10 employees to develop a workplace equity review and plan to ensure gender and racial equity in the workplace concerning wages and decision-making.
- Ensure equal gender representation for all Government boards and commissions.
- Institute a minimum living wage.
- Decriminalise personal possession of marijuana up to one ounce.
- Review the justice system with an intention of making restorative justice central to the system.
- Implement a bottle bill (beverage container deposit legislation) for glass and aluminium containers to encourage a greater rate of recycling and reduce the public health and biodiversity risks of such litter.
- Extend the school day to 5pm.
- Fixed term elections, every five years, on the last Saturday of June.
- Require any MP defecting from one Party to another (or to the position of an Independent) to contest a by-election six months after their defection, with the subsequent winner to serve the remainder of the fixed parliamentary tenure.
- Replace the House of Assembly and Senate with a single-chamber legislature composed of 18 MPs from single-seat constituencies elected by the existing system (first-past-the-post), and with nine MPs elected by proportional representation through a second party-list vote.

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