**CAMPAIGN SPEECH : WAR ON DRUGS**

**FOR**

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The dangerous use of illegal drugs and the rampant misuse of legal drugs has been a big issue in the United States for a long time.... and although there has been a continued history of the proliferation of abuse of all different forms and kinds of drugs throughout our history, we live in **THESE** times. While we can learn from the past... we can research how this epidemic took hold, destroying our communities and neighbors throughout history, the simple truth is that we are here and alive **NOW**... we know more... we hear more... and there are more facts, figures, and practical ways that we can tackle the war on drugs. In 1971, then President Richard Nixon declared that “Drug abuse was Public Enemy Number One.” He vowed to “combat illegal drug use by greatly increasing penalties, enforcement, and incarceration of drug offenders.” This has been a major campaign with full support of the White House.

It has been estimated that over the years, over **ONE TRILLION DOLLARS** has been invested in combatting the availability and use of illegal drugs. If we look back a few years, we can also see that “approximately **3.3 BILLION** dollars has been spent annually to incarcerate people charged with drug related offenses.” Thats **BILLIONS** of dollars that might have been put towards education, rehabilitation, and supporting communities to combat and eliminate drug use in productive, lasting, effective ways... it means that if this issue were more successfully tackled, those financial resources might be put to better use supporting our communities, getting to the root of the issue, and establishing permanent solutions to age old issues.

We all know that in business... in commerce... in the exchange of financial negotiation, goods and services are sold to people who by them. For any item sold there are two sides...supply and demand. The intent of this war on drugs was to eliminate the supply side of the equation... to make it so “unattractive,” so costly... with respect to weighing heavily on time, freedom, and quality of life, that the actions of the “war” would deter use. "If the people can't get it then they won't want it." With this in mind the US poured unprecedented amounts of money and logistical support in order to stop illicit drug shipments with the intention of drying up the “supply chains.” Those efforts have been notable and attention grabbing.... “legends” have been made... heroes and villains have been identified, supposed leaks have been plugged, and the entire process has provoked great headlines. "Today we stopped $XX million dollars of cocaine.”

The headlines look, for lack of a better word, “impressive,” and it looks like the United States government has been on the right track, but by stopping these shipments, the demand stayed the same or even grew. This caused the market for illegal drugs to skyrocket in price. This means a “win situation... “ for the cartels as they make more profit for each shipment.

With the war on drugs, there also followed an increase in criminal activity. With more stringent regulations passed in the Nixon era, having even a small portion of a drug could get you jail time. The [United States incarceration rate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_incarceration_rate) has tripled in the past forty-eight years since the initiation of the war on drugs. This has caused US jail systems to be flooded & has made way for "for profit jails".

Beyond just the incarceration rate, violent crimes have increased. With accelerated profits from illegal drugs, we have seen more violence, which has also cost the US hundreds of billions of dollars. The US spends 51 billion dollars annually on this war.

If elected, I would take a serious look at this dire issue, and formulate legislation to end the wasteful, tragic, war on drugs. We have seen that the systems, laws, and regulations currently in place don’t work and are costing each one of us, the US taxpayers, billions of dollars... not to mention loss of life, damage to infrastructure, and threats to productive quality of life. I would instead work on the demand side of the equation. I would create rehab centers and work within the communities by creating a stronger, more effective, practical support system for those affected by drug abuse. It is my intention that it is possible, with proper guidance, that we can address the issues at individual and community levels, reduce the chance of relapse, and diminish the costs to taxpayers while creating jobs and restoring personal dignity to those caught in the crossfire of this deadly war.

According to reports in the National Institute on Drug Abuse, in an article titled, “Georgia Opioid Summary, “In 2017, there were 1,014 overdose deaths involving opioids in Georgia—a rate of 9.7 deaths per 100,000 persons, compared to the national rate of 14.6 deaths per 100,000 persons.” Statistics like these are unacceptable. We have to insure that our families, friends, and neighbors are safe from the predatory nature of drug abuse. As your Congressman from Georgia’s 10th District, I will focus my efforts to insure that this state’s war on drugs begins to win some battles... and save lives. Thank you.