

My name is Izaak Samuel Standridge, and I am seeking election to the Blount County Commission to represent District 5 on seat A. After graduating from Alcoa High School in 2004, I earned a B.A. degree in history at Maryville College in 2008. While attending Maryville College, I started the Maryville College Libertarian Party, which continues impacting the campus today.

After college, I went on to serve in the Libertarian Party of Tennessee and am currently serving as Vice Chair for the state. My interest in civic service goes beyond the political sphere and into the serving people in need. Twice I've enjoyed the opportunity to travel to Africa, and on the second visit (2007) I volunteered for several months in an orphanage.

I am a strong advocate for reducing spending, reducing taxes, and reducing the role that government plays in individuals lives. I am also a strong advocate in "protect(ing) the rural, natural and historic qualities of Blount County and East Tennessee." I am however concerned that policies invoked by governments, in regards to the issues listed above, have only caused conflict between the citizens and their representatives instead of thinking through issues that could allow for cooperation.

I am a believer this individuals act according to their incentives, and the reality is that many environmental policies have all of the incentives backwards. Take for instance the Endangered Species Act; the message of the Endangered Species Act is that if you find an endangered species on your property the incentive is really to kill the species and bury it, because if the government catches wind of the species being on your property then the government will acquire your property and no longer allow you to use it in such a way that benefits you.

My time in Africa taught me a valuable lesson: poor economies are larger contributors to environmental degradation then wealthier economies. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that individual's main concerns are ensuring that they have the basic necessities; once individual's basic necessities are met, they begin to seek out ways to further improve the quality of their lives such as clean air and clean water. There are also studies that support the claim that as individual wealth grows, pollution declines.¹

As a county commissioner, I can have a direct impact on the tax rate in the county. There is a correlation between lowering taxes and increasing wealth. Furthermore, if government is really concerned about the natural world, then it needs to be concerned enough to think through the consequences of its actions. Not to mention, there are hundreds of worthy environmental goals and each of them are competing against one another; because whether we like it or not, we do have limited resources. As such, there have been a lot of issues raised in regards to human consumption. It is true that humans are continually consuming, with every breath in fact, but humans also have the unique ability to produce. As such, I can't buy into the notion that humans are a pox on the created world.

In closing, I support cooperation and human ingenuity in regards to the mission that the Raven Society has set out for our community. As a commissioner, I will not stand in the way of individuals finding solutions for our county and improve the standard of living for every individual in our community.

¹ Gene M. Grossman and Alan B. Krueger, "Economic Growth and the Environment," Quarterly Journal of Economics 110, no. 2 (1995), 353-77.