

2010 candidate questionnaire

NAME: Gary Black

PARTY: Republican

SEEKING: Agriculture Commissioner



1. Why are you seeking your office?

I believe strongly in safe food, strong farms and a responsible government for all Georgians. My reason for running is to implement a 21st century vision to serve our citizens in these vital areas. Georgians want and deserve safe food - a matter of public health. Georgians are more aware than ever of the importance of strong farms - a matter of national security. Georgians also want their government to be more responsible – a matter of fiscal discipline and performance. I have the experience and passion necessary to lead the department to fulfill this mission.

2. What do you expect to accomplish if elected?

I will establish a positive, goal-oriented workplace accompanied by a system to measure results. I will inspire, motivate, and hold all personnel accountable in a manner that will best serve the consumers and farmers of Georgia. Department employees are the “boots on the ground” professionals whose seal of approval impacts public health, consumer confidence and the agricultural marketplace. I will improve utilization of technology and place a high priority on improving customer service for all taxpayers. Georgia needs fresh, but experienced leadership to put this department on the right track.

3. What distinguishes your candidacy?

I have a proven track record of successful service to Georgia agriculture that spans 29 years. My vision for the future is relevant. My grassroots organization truly reaches to every county of Georgia. My experience in developing public policy, promoting agriculture and managing a food safety research consortium best equips me to meet the challenges of the future.

4. What are the key issues in your race?

Safe food is the highest priority, yet all three tenets of my campaign are definitely woven together. If we do not have safe food, we will not have strong farms, and government must always perform the function of ensuring food safety with professionalism, accuracy, and urgency, all in a cost-effective manner.

5. Pick one issue. Expand on how you will address it.

I will enforce food safety laws with science-based, common-sense standards and ensure that inspectors have the equipment and support to perform their duties effectively. I will restructure job missions from the division manager to inspector to ensure that 100% of their focus is on food safety and institute a better plan for cross-training other non-food safety personnel on components of the food safety mission to provide back-up in emergency situations. I will establish a professional certification program for Georgia's food safety inspectors. Educational/service incentives will help retain the best employees. This move will improve performance and be more cost-effective.

6. Give a 100 word summary of your background.

I raise beef cattle in Commerce, GA. A 1980 UGA Agricultural Education graduate, I began my career with Georgia Farm Bureau as the organization's young farmer leadership coordinator. From 1989 to April 2010, I served as President of the Georgia Agribusiness Council, the state's chamber for agriculture. I led the GA Food Industry Partnership research consortium for the past 13 years. In 1993, I led the development of AgriTrust of Georgia, a self-funded program for worker's compensation insurance. Under my leadership, AgriTrust grew to a \$6 million business that now provides coverage for over 18,000 agricultural employees in Georgia.

Gary W. Black
Republican Candidate for Commissioner of Agriculture
State of Georgia