

*2020 GwinnettForum candidate questionnaire*

**NAME: Richard Steele**  
**PARTY: Republican**  
**SEEKING: Gwinnett Tax Commissioner**

**1. Why are you seeking your office?**

I am seeking this office because, having held it since 2011, and having worked in the office since 2005, I understand how important it is to have an experienced, knowledgeable, and skilled person in office who has established a reputation of honesty, integrity, ability, and leadership in the Gwinnett community. I want to continue to provide the excellent customer service that Gwinnett citizens have come to expect, and that other counties try to imitate. I also want the public to be able to trust the office to properly handle their \$1.5 billion that pass through the office each year.

**2. What do you expect to accomplish if elected?**

I will continue to make the office reflective of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Gwinnett. This will include the adoption of new technology as it becomes available to reduce the need for anyone to visit an actual office to conduct their business. Under my leadership, the office will continue to reach out to and to serve all people and all communities in Gwinnett County by having a diverse staff, and by making all services, both in-person and electronic, accessible in multiple languages.

**3. What distinguishes your candidacy?**

I have worked in the Tax Commissioner's office for 15 and a half years, and have handled every aspect of the office, including tag office and call center management, facilities management, budgeting, accounting, project management, automated payment processing, contract negotiation, major software installations, and pandemic emergency response. I also possess a deep understanding of the laws, rules, and regulations that govern everything the office does. I have been able to work with other elected officials at all levels to achieve goals. The office, under my leadership, has become an example for other counties to follow, and they frequently do.

**4. Pick any one issue. Expand on how you will address it.**

Services for tax and tag business that are mandatory for everyone must be accessible to everyone, especially in a county as diverse as Gwinnett. I will continue to expand the diversity of spoken languages in the office so that in-person services, phone calls and emails are helpful and effective for all. Publications and on-line services, already

available in Spanish, will be available in other languages. I will also continue to reach out to communities to find out what challenges those communities face with tax and tag issues, and work to resolve them.

**5. Suggest ways to jump-start the economy after COVID-19.**

To be able to jump-start the economy after COVID-19, the economy must survive until then. Following all CDC guidelines, businesses must be allowed to open, conduct their business, and remain viable. Going forward, a main focus must be on having a safe but working economy through the pandemic, rather than a total shut down that would require a total and lengthy rebuild. Afterward, state and local governments should focus on providing assistance specifically to small businesses, while implementing COVID-19 prevention and mitigation policies that are favorable and fair to all businesses.

**6. Please give a 100 word summary on your background.**

I have lived in Georgia all my life and have been a resident of Gwinnett County for 20 years. After earning my B.S.Ed. in 1996 from UGA, I worked as the Operations Manager for UGA transit. I was later a budget analyst for the CDC, and began working for the Gwinnett Tax Commissioner's office in 2005. From Tag Office Manager, I rose through the ranks to the positions of Senior Tag Manager, Property Tax Director, Chief Deputy Tax Commissioner, and then was sworn in as Tax Commissioner in 2011.