

Danny O'Connor Stump Speech

When I graduated from Wright State, I didn't go straight into law school like many of my peers. Instead, I spent a year working with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. It was my way of preparing myself to practice law. You see, the Jesuits were founded on the belief that we are all called to serve. And I knew that, if I truly wanted to be able to represent other people, I first needed to understand what that really meant.

So I went to work in this country's poorest neighborhoods. I met with veterans who had fallen through the cracks and couldn't get their VA benefits; I worked with parents who had lost their jobs and feared homelessness for their families; I spoke to disabled seniors who needed access to their Medicare and Social Security benefits. The people I worked with were fighting for a chance: they were doing the best they could under impossible circumstances. And working with them helped me to better understand the nature of service and how to meet the needs of others. It reminded me that each one of us holds a belief in American Dream, a dream that my ancestors knew fondly. A dream that so many our ancestors risked their lives for, which said that anything in this country could come true.

We're living in an America where our citizens aren't so sure whether that's true anymore. And as a lifelong Ohioan, I share that concern. The fact is, our representatives in Congress aren't working for us. They care more about representing the interests of their donors and special interest groups than they do about the families who live across the street from them. And that isn't right.

We have folks working 40 hours a week right now, who are living below the middle class. Who are working multiple jobs for their families and still struggling to get by. We have people right now who are fighting to get health insurance, or who can barely afford the insurance they already have. We have students from our district, who are in school right now working for a college degree and getting buried under a mountain of debt. And right now, we have families that are losing their loved ones to the opioid epidemic, thousands of lives lost because we can't get the funds to treat them.

Our country used to be measured by the opportunities that our citizens were able to work toward. But we've lost sight of those opportunities, and it's hurting our country. It's causing us to lose faith in the belief that we all have a fair shot at the American Dream. And it all goes back to the fact that we don't have representatives who are looking out for our needs, or the best interests of our communities.

For the last four months, we've gone without a representative in Congress—our seat was vacated in January when our Congressman decided he wanted to leave our district 10 months early, for a job that pays more in one year than what most of us will take home in the next 10 years combined. But to be honest, we've been without real representation for far longer than that. Right before our Congressman left, he decided to vote for a 1.5 trillion-dollar tax bill, 83% of which went to the country's top 1%. Before that, he voted to strip away healthcare from nearly 500,000 Ohioans, which would have destroyed the Medicaid expansion and taken opioid treatment away from thousands.

That's not what real representation looks like. That's not what real service looks like. I grew up in rural Ohio. I went to school just east of Dayton, Ohio. I work for my community in Columbus, Ohio. And at no point have I ever heard the people in my neighborhood complain that the wealthiest among us don't get a fair shake. At no point have I ever heard them say that we don't need policies that work for everyone. In fact, I've heard just the opposite.

When I was growing up, I lived in a small town in Western Ohio. It was the kind of community where everyone looked out for one another, regardless of your political beliefs. My mom was a school teacher

there. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009. It was a frightening time, but our neighbors were there for us, and they supported my family. And it was during those moments of uncertainty that I came to realize why policies that work for everyone matter. Because my mom wasn't alone, and in fact, she was one of the lucky ones: she had good health insurance. She was able to get a new drug through her provider that saved her life. But not everyone has what my mom did, and if Congress' vote to eliminate the Affordable Care Act had passed, she would have had a pre-existing condition that would have made it unbelievably expensive—if not impossible—to get coverage. These are the policies that I'm fighting for: the policies that affect everyone, but they don't just stop with healthcare.

Whether it was working in the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office, or starting my own family law practice as a small-business owner, or getting elected Franklin County Recorder in 2016, I've done my best to advocate for the kinds of laws and policies that can help change people's lives. In the Recorder's Office, we've implemented paid family leave; we've helped veterans in their job searches and the homeless in their struggles to find housing. Not only that, but we've also given our employees pay raises to ensure that they're making a living wage. Most importantly, we've saved taxpayers over one million dollars and dramatically cut wait times for folks needing records and services from the county.

I'm proud of my record. And I'm proud of the fact that my life has been shaped by the stories I've witnessed, and they've taught me what it means to serve. And it's because of those stories that I'm looking to change our history of representation in this district.

My opponent is looking to keep it the same. We know this because our former Congressman already gave \$150,000 to my opponent's campaign. We know this because my opponent ran ads in the primary saying that he also would have voted to strip away healthcare from Ohioans like my mom. We know this because my opponent has helped lead a statehouse in Columbus that's raided local government funding—telling offices like mine what our communities need, instead of allowing us to make those decisions for ourselves. My opponent is running to perpetuate a legacy of representation in this district, that has literally left us without a voice in Washington. If Congress voted again to repeal the Affordable Care Act or to pass another tax cut for billionaires right now, *you wouldn't even have a vote*.

Our district needs more than that. Our district needs a representative who understands service, who understands the struggles of middle-class families here in Central Ohio. A Congressman who will work every day to rebuild an economy that rewards hard work, because nobody working 40 hours a week should have to live in poverty. A Congressman who will fight for a tax system that doesn't treat small-business owners like second-class citizens, just because they don't have lobbyists in D.C. A Congressman who will work to ensure that every American, no matter their circumstances, can get the quality, affordable healthcare they deserve.

On August 7th, we will finally have the opportunity to vote for real representation in Congress, and I'm here to ask that you vote for me.

My name is Danny O'Connor, and I'm running to be your Congressman.

Thank you.