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Meet your new congressman: From humble Amish beginnings, Lloyd Smucker is ready to fulfill his mandate



SAM JANESCH | Staff Writer Nov 10, 2016



DAN MARSCHKA | Staff Photographer

Lloyd Smucker during an interview at his Lancaster home in November 2016.

Lloyd Smucker in many ways personifies the American Dream that was at the heart of his winning campaign for Congress in Lancaster County.

Born to an Amish family of 12 children on their family-owned farm near Weavertown, he remembers the “stressful” trips to the grocery store with his mother and the modest means by which they lived on his father’s income as a roofer.

“Walking going up and down the aisle she wanted to be sure she didn’t have to return things when she went to the register,” Smucker said.

After they left Old Order Amish when he was 5 years old, he became the first in his family to attend high school, paying his Lancaster Mennonite High School tuition by hanging drywall at night for his brother's small drywall business — which he bought for \$1,000 when he graduated at the age of 17.

Now, after 25 years of growing the company and eight years as a state Senator, the 52-year-old Republican has secured a coveted congressional seat held by only three men in the last half-century.

“I think Trump has received a mandate and I think (members of Congress) have received a mandate ... of ensuring that the American Dream is accessible to all,” Smucker said in a wide-ranging interview Wednesday at his home in West Lampeter Township.

Relaxed, but still energized from his [Tuesday night victory](#), he sat in jeans and a sweater under his covered backyard porch as the rain fell in a spacious, colorful yard. Fourteen-year-old Nicholas listened nearby as his dad talked about everything from a humble childhood to his upcoming orientation for freshmen congressmen in the nation's Capitol.

Smucker, concluding his second four-year term representing southern Lancaster County in Harrisburg, will succeed retiring U.S. Rep. Joe Pitts, a 77-year-old Republican from Chester County who has held the district seat since 1997. Before Pitts, Republican U.S. Rep. Bob Walker represented the district for 20 years and Republican Edwin Eshleman held it for 10 years before that.

The silent majority

Smucker said it was gratifying and humbling to emerge victorious from Tuesday night's election over Democrat Christina Hartman and Libertarian Shawn House. He won by 11 percentage points in a district where Republicans outnumber Democrats 45 percent to 39 percent.

He said it was “amazing” to watch Republicans take control of the White House, U.S. Senate and U.S. House by margins that were uniformly unexpected.

“There had always been this talk about the silent majority and clearly that's what happened,” Smucker said, adding that he believes the current administration's foreign and economic policies, in part, fueled widespread voter frustration.

With a GOP sweep in Washington, D.C., Smucker said one of the first things on the agenda will be the effort to repeal President Obama's Affordable Care Act and replace it with a “more consumer-driven system that will drive down costs.”

Beyond that, he believes there will be real progress on tax and regulatory reform that will benefit the economy.

As for the divisive rhetoric—including Trump's unconventional bashing of House Speaker Paul Ryan—Smucker pointed to Trump's victory speech as a sign of a swift change in the dialogue.

“We have aggressive campaigns. You have hard fought battles. The one I just took part in was a hard-fought battle but then at the end of the day we all know that we're part of the same team,” Smucker said.

‘Hit the ground running’

As he awaits his committee assignments, Smucker would like to at some point reach the popular Ways and Means committee the key legislative body responsible for tax-related laws. Smucker thinks he would also fit well into the Transportation and Infrastructure, Agriculture, Foreign Relations, or Education and Workforce groups.

Pitts, who chairs the subcommittee on Health, said through his spokesman he thinks Smucker will “hit the ground running,” specifically in helping to strengthen the economy.

“It’s his strong point as a small-businessman and as an employer, creating a business. Lower taxes, lower regulations,” said Pitts, who Smucker said kept in contact regularly during the campaign.

But the passing of the guard — the first in two decades for the district 16th Congressional District that covers most of Lancaster County as well as parts of Berks and Chester counties — will have to wait a few more months.

Until then, Smucker said he’ll be moving quickly to fill critical staffing spots like his new chief of staff and possibly relocate from his downtown Lancaster office. But one thing’s for sure: he’s keeping his West Lampeter Township home to become the first Lancaster countian to hold elected federal office since Bob Walker.

For Smucker, “it’s a privilege and an honor and it’s also quite the responsibility.”



Lloyd Smucker beats Christina Hartman, Shawn House in 16th Congressional District race