

Transcript of Interview with Gary Chambers,
U.S. Senate Candidate

Interview by Aaron Edelheit

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*Lightly edited for readability

Aaron: Gary Chambers, thank you so much for joining me. You're the first politician I've ever interviewed and so I'm a little nervous because I'm normally an investor focusing on the investment markets. But as a person who passionately believes that marijuana should be legalized, regulated, and decriminalized, I find your candidacy and your campaign fascinating. And I think that investors in the cannabis industry would be well-served to support your campaign to get the message of cannabis legalization out to a broader audience. So, thank you so much for just agreeing to do this interview.

Gary: Thank you.

Aaron: I'm curious, how did you choose marijuana as your kind of coming out campaign issue?

Gary: Well, my communications director, Eric Sanchez, wrote a script that he presented to me and our media director Erwin Marionneaux, and the script was compelling. It talked about what was important as far as the legislation goes and where the numbers are for us as a country. And I am someone who uses cannabis and believe that this is something that shouldn't be as controversial as it is. We thought it would cut through the noise. And so, it was a really simple decision for me. We decided to do it and we did, and it's been transformative for our campaign.

Aaron: So, I'm glad that you said that because I wanted to ask, do you think marijuana or cannabis legalization will resonate as an issue? And more importantly, actively drive voters to come out to vote?

Gary: I absolutely think that is going to drive voters to come out and vote, especially young voters and people who feel disenfranchised, people who have been negatively impacted by cannabis legislation. There are tons of families in the state of Louisiana who have loved ones who have been arrested or incarcerated for simple possession and want to see these pieces of legislation change and want an advocate in their U.S. senator as somebody who's going to go there and fight for this legislation and fight to ensure that people have some form of equity in this country as it relates to this issue.

Aaron: So, statistics and facts matter, and I like to cite at least one statistic when it comes to opioids, and that the number one way to lower opioid overdoses, which is plaguing our country is to open one cannabis dispensary. And that in the surrounding areas, you have a 20 percent drop in opioid deaths. Now in your campaign ad, you use another very important statistic. Can you talk to me about 37 seconds and what that means?

Gary: Every 37 seconds someone is arrested for cannabis use in this country, and that is a travesty. It's something that we have to be very intentional about doing something about. And it's why we did the ad to ensure that people understood that far too often in this country, every minute people are being arrested for something that people are profiting off of the people who are investing in cannabis investment or making a profit off something that people are still going to jail for in this country. And it's not right, and we need to do everything in our power to make sure that that's not still happening in this country.

Aaron: I completely agree. I've been supporting The Weldon Project and trying to advocate to get clemency for prisoners. And it is completely insane to me that as an investor, I'm investing in state legal businesses. And my hope is that I am going to myself and my investors are going to profit and people are still being arrested to this day for nonviolent cannabis possession and that people are still in prison. It's beyond wrong. It's one of the absurdities of cannabis federal illegality, at least. And you know, it's a frustrating issue. I don't know what else someone like myself, like what else do you think that investors who are passionate about this issue can do?

Gary: I think put your money where your mouth is as often as possible, not just in the things that yield you a return, but the things that give us equity and justice. Supporting

not just my campaign, but the campaign of candidates who will push the legalization of cannabis in all 50 states to help fund a national conversation around legalization of cannabis. To push this president to do the things that he said that he would do around cannabis, from decriminalizing to studying its impacts. There's a ton of things that we could do in the immediate, but the people with the resources are often not connected to the people who are doing the work. And so, it is incumbent of the people with the resources to find out how can they get their resources connected to people who are doing the work.

Aaron: No, I like that. Now, I think most people don't have strong opinions about marijuana, and most people probably agree it should be legal, but I get the sense, and maybe I'm wrong that because it's not a hot-button issue, it doesn't get the kind of support necessary to get it to the finish line. Like when I read between the lines of what either politicians in power are talking about, it doesn't seem like they're like, Oh, if I delay this or I don't really support it, it's not really going to affect me. It's not going to affect people voting for me. How would you respond to that?

Gary: I think that this conversation affects us all, and it's a conversation that we need to be having in this country.

Aaron: Yeah, no, I agree. I'm not from Louisiana, but when I was doing research, preparing for our interview, I frankly couldn't believe that there hasn't been an African American who has won a statewide office election since Reconstruction. Despite a third of Louisiana being African American, and it was just a shocking statistic. And with that with the incumbent that you're running against, I'm curious, what is your strategy to kind of overcome the odds of fighting an incumbent and the past history of no one like you winning a statewide race?

Gary: Well, I think the reason nobody like me has won a statewide race is because they haven't had the resources to win. There was a sister named Gwen Collins Greenup, who ran for secretary of state in Louisiana. She had \$9,000 in her campaign account. She got forty one percent of the vote. If she had had \$10 million, like John Bel Edwards, who was the white Democrat in the race, he became the governor of the state of Louisiana in the same year that Gwen Collins Green Up had \$9,000 in the bank. John Bell had 10 million in the bank, and so the black woman who ran for this seat was not

able to be victorious because she didn't have the resources to be able to talk to voters and touch voters. This is really not just a race game as it relates to how we win, it's a finance game. There are people black, white and everything in between who believe in the same things that we believe in. But can you touch those voters? Can you reach those people with your message? And often the financial structure of this state does not want to see people like me elected so they don't put their resources into those campaigns. But the beauty of a U.S. Senate race is a U.S. senator that impacts the entire country. And so, it is a reason for the entire country to be invested in what happens in Louisiana. And the message that we've been sending to the Democratic Party and to everybody else is, Houston is a city of four, three, four million people. Louisiana is a state of three point nine million people, four million people. If you can do the work of flipping Harris County in Texas, surely you can flip Louisiana. And so, the party, as well as people who are concerned about how do we make change in this country, should look at Louisiana as an opportunity where your money will go further to be able to touch voters and make an impact to win an election.

Aaron: No, that's great. I follow you on Twitter and I see you going to New York, and I see you going to California and all these other places. It's to tell that message and to help raise that money from outside resources to help you have the capital to run a well-funded campaign.

Gary: Absolutely.

Aaron: Got it. Who has been an inspiration to you and are there other candidates that are running on legalization of marijuana like you are that you recommend someone like myself to pay attention to?

Gary: There are a whole host of folks in state legislatures around the country who are pushing legalization efforts. One of my good friends, State Rep Edmund Jordan, here. former State Rep Ted James. There's also broad legalization efforts here in Louisiana. I don't necessarily have a bunch of political role models. My role model is my father, a man who worked hard to provide for me and give me a life that I didn't deserve, to have an opportunity to be able to run for the U.S. Senate because he gave me, most of all, the ability to believe in myself.

Aaron: That's great. I can tell you that my father is an inspiration to me as well. He grew up very poor and I've been provided incredible advantages to get where I am, so that really resonates a lot with me. Thank you. Obviously, people can give to your campaign. Are there other ways that regular people or people who are not politicians can help you?

Gary: They can sign up on our website to volunteer. We're going to need people all over the country to phone bank, folks to get on buses and come knock doors for us and help us mobilize and vote all over this state.

Aaron: Well, that's great. Well listen, I really appreciate you joining us. I think your message is really important, and for anyone investing in the cannabis space, I think it makes sense to support your campaign to keep the pressure on politicians so that it's a win for people that are being arrested unfairly, it's a win for investors, it's a win for consumers, it's a win for jobs and taxes. So, I'm wishing you good luck and rooting you on and thank you so much for joining me.

Gary: Thank you. Be well, brother.