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Fall 2022

Dear Neighbor,

Campaigning in our community, you go down a lot of long roads. At the end of every road, I've always found a story. My name is Tina Spears, and I'm running to be the next State Representative for District 36 in Charlestown, South Kingstown, Westerly and Block Island. As a first time candidate, I've learned a lot over the last 6 months, and I want to share some of what I've learned with you.

I started reaching out to voters in May, and since then we've knocked on thousands of doors in every corner of this district to listen. Here's what I've heard:

- **People love living here.** Almost every person I met talked about how much they care about this community and how much they want to stay here. I understand. I came to Charlestown nearly 30 years ago, and have loved raising a family here.

I met a gentleman who is 99 and wears a permanent smile. His daughter helps care for him so he can live at home, but it isn't easy. I learned he started a local ice cream shop, and his daughter was so proud of the ways he supported our community throughout his life. Local ties are an incredible strength.

- **The cost of living is on everyone's minds.** People worry about the cost of gas, electricity, groceries and housing. These are national problems, but we need to do all we can to build a strong local economy to address inflation. I've heard over and over: Will my kids be able to live here? Will I be able to stay when I retire?

I met a couple who live alone. He's a proud veteran and an amputee, and depends on his wife to care for him. I met many older neighbors who don't have much money, but have a lot of determination to stay in our community. Even though they might not have adequate support services, they want to stay here at home.

- **We must preserve our environment.** People want to protect our coastline from storms and erosion. They love our open spaces and support green energy solutions, but worry about solar farms clearing too much land. People want to protect our groundwater and shoreline access. We must act now on climate change and press for state and local investments. My family spends weekends boating, fishing and hiking, so I'm honored to be endorsed by Clean Water Action and Climate Action RI. We must insist on smart local development.

I met a local URI student. He's 21 and studying environmental science while working full-time as a carpenter. He's strapped with work and school, but when he can he likes to fish, and he really cares about our wetlands. He's thinking about a career in sustainable building. He was so inspiring, and as a URI alum who also worked full-time to pay my way, I was proud to meet him. He is our future.

- **We must invest in our schools.** I heard that people want the next generation to have a quality public school education, but they want to know that our tax dollars are used wisely and efficiently. I'm proud that my sons are the third generation to attend our public schools, and I will advocate for our fair share of state resources.

I knocked on a door, and a woman and her 7 year old daughter came out on the porch. With a ballerina dress on – backwards – the girl asked me question after question about why I was running. She was amazing! I saw a lot of families bring their kids to polling places on primary day so they could see how voting happens. A healthy democracy needs strong schools and strong participation.

- **People want and deserve access to care when they need it.** Parents want a stronger mental health safety net for their teenagers. Women want access to reproductive healthcare. Our elders deserve quality healthcare and access to transportation so they can age with dignity at home.

On the Block Island ferry I met Grace, an 84-year-old retired gynecologist. She remembers what it was like when women didn't have a choice about reproductive healthcare. I told her I'm proud our state codified Roe v Wade into law and that everyone should be able to make their own healthcare choices. On primary day, Grace called to see if I had won - a highlight of my night.

- **People are tired of national politics.** They see fighting and divisiveness block progress for real people. They want elected officials to solve problems. Period.

I believe we have a lot in common – we all want a strong future. I'm meeting people where they are, listening and identifying issues we can act on together. No single elected official can solve our problems. We all need to get involved to build the future we want. One of the most inspiring parts of this campaign are the people – many who started as strangers – who volunteered to reach out to neighbors and help bring us together. Their belief in change keeps me motivated!

I am extremely grateful to everyone who has taken the time to share their stories with me. I'm listening, I'm keeping your stories with me, and I know change is possible.

For a decade I've advocated for people with disabilities and have helped win victories at the State House -- wage increases for workers, paid leave for families, and increased support services. Now I want to try to make change as an elected official, because the needs of South County's elders and working families must be heard in Providence.

I'll be knocking on doors and attending community events, but you can also reach me at **Tina@TinaSpearsRI.com** or **401-329-6644**. I will continue to share information about the campaign through my newsletter - sign up at **TinaSpearsRI.com**

Thank you, and I respectfully ask for your vote on November 8 at the polls or during early voting, October 19 – November 7, at your Town Hall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Spears". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tina Spears