

Substantial Disruption



MASAMAAZ

By Mike Tully

An Arizona state senator may have committed political suicide while campaigning to promote himself to the United States Congress. Steve Smith, who resides in Maricopa, a small town south of the Phoenix area tucked between two Indian reservations, is one of three Republicans hoping to unseat Democratic Congressman Tom O'Halleran. First elected to the Arizona legislature in 2010, Smith's achievements include joining 15 fellow legislators to support designation of a "National Day of the Cowboy." The legislation reads, "the cowboy is a true American icon occupying a central place in the public's imagination." The Day of the Cowboy, an actual thing, is celebrated on the 4th Saturday of July, which this year falls on the 28th. [Yippee-ki-yay](#).

Back to political suicide – but first, a side note. Smith is not the only suicidal politician in Arizona this year. For example, Yahya Yuksel, a Democratic candidate for the Congressional seat being vacated by Martha McSally, who is running for the Senate, so impressed his fellow Democrats that the Pima County Democratic Party Executive Board [voted to recommend](#) that fellow Dems support one of the six other candidates. *Anybody but Yahya*. The 28-year-old burned his bridges when asked about allegations he had raped an intoxicated teen age girl when he was in high school. (He was never charged.) Yuksel fielded the questions by abruptly leaving the news conference. He returned after a confrontation and the event turned into an ugly shouting match. The spectacle motivated Democratic leaders to get their Yahya out.

Then there's Bobby Wilson, a Republican gun advocate running for the Arizona Legislature from District Two, which stretches from the Tucson metropolitan area to the Mexican border. [The Arizona Republic reported](#) that Wilson addressed a "big crowd gathered in a Tucson church last week, ready to hear candidates' plans for gun-control legislation." Bobby echoed the NRA's "good guy with a gun" trope, then shared a heart-warming anecdote about shooting his mother in the face and killing her. He assured the appalled group that he acted in self-defense, although he also managed to kill his sister and burn down the house. He was charged with homicide, but never convicted. He eventually returned to school, became a lawyer, and is running a campaign based partially on matricide. Yippee-ki-yay, Mother.

Steve Smith hasn't danced around the absurdity maypole quite as colorfully as Yahya and Bobby, but he may regret making a statement at a campaign event in Marana. Invoking his experience as a member of the Legislature, Smith told the audience, "I want to be able to do the things we've been able to do that has made Arizona so successful." Putting aside the grammatical hiccup ("things has?"), the problem is his contention that Arizona is "so successful." That might not be the most effective bragging point.

For example, Smith is running largely on his devotion to "family values," based on his campaign [website](#). He has work to do: "Wallet Hub" [ranks Arizona 40th](#) in its survey of "Best States to Raise A Family." The [2018 Kids Count Data Book](#) also places Arizona near the bottom when it comes to taking care of kids. The state is 46th in "economic well-being," 45th in "education," and 46th in "family and community." The overall ranking is 45th. The highest rating – 38th of all the states – was

in the area of “health.” The likely explanation for that score is Arizona’s decision, supported by legislative Democrats and a handful of Republicans, to expand the State’s Medicaid rolls under the Affordable Care Act. [Arizona’s uninsured rate](#) dropped from 17.1% of the population in 2013 to 10.8% in 2016, the 12th largest decrease in the nation. Mr. “Family Values” not only voted against that expansion, he joined other Republican legislators in suing to overturn the expansion and deny health care to thousands of Arizonans, many of them children. Yippee-ki-family-values-yay.

Here’s how “successful” Arizona is: data from the U. S. Bureau of the Census show Arizona had the [8th highest poverty rate](#) in the country in 2017, as reported by *U. S. News & World Report*. “Wallet Hub’s” analysis of the states with the [most underprivileged children](#) in 2017 ranked Arizona 6th. A state with the nation’s [8th lowest GDP per capita](#) is going to take a while to improve those figures – especially with “family values” legislators like Steve Smith who vote to deny health care to their constituents. Smith’s refusal, with other Arizona Republicans, to adequately fund schools has resulted in [Arizona being ranked 45th](#) in the nation by *Education Week*. This is the Arizona “success” Smith hopes to inflict on the nation.

Smith’s desire to make America “successful” in the same manner as Arizona does, however, suggest a timely and appropriate campaign slogan. The candidate should copy from Donald Trump, whom he admires, and stitch this on his baseball cap:

MASAMAAZ: “Make America Suck As Much As Arizona.” Yippee-ki-yay.