

# Smith Hopes Dean's Aid Will Ignite Bid For Gephardt's Seat

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It is a political necessity for candidates who run in crowded primaries to find ways to distinguish themselves from their opponents — a fact recognized by **Jeff Smith**, who is one of 10 Democrats running in the Aug. 3 primary for Missouri's open 3rd District seat.

Smith, an educator who is seeking to succeed retiring 14-term Democratic Rep. Richard A. Gephardt in the St. Louis-based district, hopes that he will get traction from a May 13 endorsement by the liberal organization Democracy for America.

The group was established recently by former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, who — like Gephardt — staged an unsuccessful bid this year for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Smith said his efforts to stand out in the primary field will benefit from being chosen as one of the “Dean Dozen,” 12 candidates for various federal, state and local offices who have been endorsed by Democracy for America.

“Anytime you have so many candidates, and one of them's got a last name that everyone knows, you want to try to figure out a way to differentiate yourself from the field,” said Smith, who teaches political science and public policy courses at Washington University and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

The candidate who possesses the name Smith said “everyone knows” is state Rep. Russ Carnahan, who is a son of the late Gov. Mel Carnahan and former Sen. Jean Carnahan. Other Democratic candidates with histories of political success include state Sen. Steve Stoll and former state Rep. Joan Barry.

But Smith says that Dean's endorsement will bolster his claim to be the “most progressive of the viable candidates” who are seeking the Democratic nomination.

Smith supports abortion rights and a “single-payer” system to deliver health care services. He opposes the death penalty and contends that he is the only one of the top-tier Democratic candidates who has emphasized environmental policy and opposed the war in Iraq since its outset.

“Particularly among fellow progressives, they say, ‘Oh, you know, Howard Dean is with him, then he must be the candidate for progressives,’” Smith said.

Smith has patterned his campaign after Dean's presidential effort, which relied heavily on a grass-roots organization of liberal activists. Smith said that he has held 47 “community coffees” to meet with prospective primary voters.

The allies' relationship goes back a couple of years. In the summer of 2002, as Dean was laying the groundwork to run for president, Smith presented a paper about party realignment at a meeting of the American Political Science Association at which Dean was a keynote speaker.

Dean and Smith talked then about the importance of meeting political activists in Iowa, which hosts the nation's first nomination contest. Smith told him that he had he worked in Iowa on the 2000 campaign of Democrat Bill Bradley and, at Dean's request, sent him some names of plugged-in activists he should contact. While Smith is relying on the political spadework of activists in the St. Louis area, he is also promoting his candidacy in Washington, D.C. He met there on May 17 with officials from the Sierra Club environmentalist group, the Communications Workers of America and Citizens for Global Solutions, an anti-war organization.