

Shavonne Hedgepeth

Candidate for Maryland's Fourth Congressional District

What PACS do or will you accept and reject support from and why?

I do not accept corporate PAC money. That commitment was made at the outset of this campaign because the people of Maryland's Fourth District deserve a representative whose first obligation is to them; not to the industries she is expected to regulate or hold accountable. That means rejecting contributions from pharmaceutical PACs, defense contractor PACs, fossil fuel PACs, and real estate investment trust PACs. I will accept and have accepted support from values-aligned organizations whose missions are consistent with the priorities of this district. Run Sister Run PAC has endorsed our campaign and already invested in outreach to voters on my behalf; I am proud of that alignment and what it represents about the kind of coalition we are building. I will continue to welcome support from labor PACs, reproductive rights organizations, environmental advocacy groups, and progressive governance organizations that share our commitment to delivery over headlines.

What is your stance on support to Israel?

The question of what America does in Gaza, Sudan, Congo, Lebanon, and Yemen is ultimately a question of who has a seat at the table when those decisions are made. Black voters in the South have been systematically excluded from that table. The gutting of the Voting Rights Act, the gerrymandering of majority-Black districts, the deliberate dilution of Black political representation in Congress; these are the conditions that keep communities most harmed by U.S. foreign policy voiceless in the rooms where it is made. My first job is to fix that, because representation is the precondition for everything else. That said, I will be direct about where I stand. In the two years since October 7, 2023, the U.S. government has spent \$21.7 billion in military aid to Israel; including ninety thousand tons of arms and equipment delivered on eight hundred transport planes and 140 ships. The consequences have not been contained in Gaza. Israel has continued military attacks inside Lebanon despite a November 2024 ceasefire agreement; civilian casualties have triggered accusations of war crimes from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. In Yemen, a conflict entangled with the regional fallout of U.S.-Israeli policy has produced one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes on earth. In January 2025, the State Department determined that genocide was being committed in Sudan's Darfur region. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, conflict-related sexual violence has increased by more than 35 percent as regional instability deepens, and the international community looks away. I support full

divestment from Israel; military aid, federal pension investment, arms sales, and economic ties. A consistent human rights standard applies to every government, every ally, and every strategic partner without exception. I hold the Israeli government to that standard. I will name any attempt to weaponize charges of antisemitism to shut down that accountability; and I will keep naming it. In April 2026, thirteen Senate Democrats joined Bernie Sanders to block nearly \$450 million in arms sales to Israel; the largest such coalition in history. Politics are shifting because moral reality has become impossible to ignore. A Congress genuinely accountable to Black America will produce a foreign policy genuinely accountable to Black and brown people globally. That is the connection I am running to make real; starting with restoring full Voting Rights Act protections so the communities most affected by these decisions finally have the representation they are owed.

Why did you decide to run for office?

In undergrad, I was writing a paper on epigenetic inheritance and transgenerational trauma; the science that documents how chronic stress and structural harm do not just live in memory but are written into the body and passed forward biologically across generations. I stumbled across a [paper](#) that detailed the impacts to the federal workforce for generations due to Woodrow Wilson's resegregation of the federal government. Fast forward a few years later, I read Project 2025 and I waited for the comprehensive and strategic response. I waited for the focused organizational infrastructure to respond to the detailed democracy dismantling plan. When we didn't get one, I decided to run for office and build a district first platform that wants to design policy, not just around our needs, but the needs of all Americans.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing the average American?

Instability; and the extractive economy that is manufacturing it at every level.

The average American is not struggling because they made bad decisions. They are struggling because the economy has been deliberately structured to extract from them at every turn. Their wages are suppressed while corporate profits hit record highs. Their rent is set by an algorithm managed by an institutional investor who was never their neighbor and will never be. Their insulin, their childcare, their hospital bill; every basic need has been financialized into a profit center. But underneath all of that is something even more corrosive: the growing conviction that government cannot do anything for you. When people cannot trust that policy will be implemented, that investments will be protected, that the rules will apply consistently, they stop believing the system is for them. That cynicism did not emerge on its own. It has been engineered over decades by people who benefit from the public that have stopped expecting delivery.

What is your plan to address the rising cost of living and housing?

The FY2027 budget would eliminate CDBG and HOME, wiping out nearly \$5 billion in community development funding that Congress has already had to restore once. My priority is to protect that funding and expand it with real accountability. I also support Low-Income Housing Tax Credits for truly affordable units, a right to counsel in eviction cases, antitrust action against algorithmic rent-fixing by corporate landlords and closing the loophole that allows institutional investors to buy up single-family homes and price working families out of homeownership. I would pursue federal property tax relief for working families and homeowners being pushed out of homes they already own, and I support raising the federal minimum wage because the cost-of-living crisis cannot be solved on one side of the ledger alone. More broadly, I support a permanent Child Tax Credit, caps on insulin and prescription drug costs, and a stable federal workforce, because when federal workers in MD-04 lose income, small businesses across the district lose revenue too.

What environmental issues are the most concerning for you?

Nationally, it is the hyperscale data center buildout. These facilities are being approved at a pace that far outstrips any honest accounting of their environmental cost. Locally, two issues demand immediate attention. The first is the proposed crematorium addition at Borgwardt Funeral Home on Powder Mill Road in Beltsville. Neighbors have raised serious concerns about mercury emissions, odors, and public health risks from siting a crematory in a residential area. The second is the Joint Base Andrews fuel spill. Over 20,000 gallons were discharged directly into the environment, contaminating soil outside the base and the nearby creek.

How will you support green energy?

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed on July 4, 2025, sharply cut the clean energy tax credits created by the Inflation Reduction Act, speeding the phaseout of wind and solar incentives. Earlier, a day-one Presidential Memorandum withdrew the Outer Continental Shelf from wind leasing and halted onshore and offshore wind development. The administration then paid a French energy company \$1 billion to abandon its offshore wind leases and forgo future U.S. projects, redirecting that support toward fossil fuels. My first priority is to reverse as much of that damage as possible: restore the full IRA clean energy tax credit framework, reinstate offshore wind leasing, and oppose legislative deadlines designed to kill projects already underway. I also support grid modernization and storage, community solar for renters and low-income households, domestic clean energy manufacturing requirements, and a just transition that protects energy workers.

What is your stance and approach to universal health care?

The U.S. already faces a shortage of 14,900 primary care providers, projected to reach 20,200 by 2036. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act worsened that gap by eliminating Grad PLUS loans for medical students, capping borrowing at \$50,000 annually and \$200,000 total, discouraging students from entering primary and family medicine and making it harder for low-income and diverse students to pursue medicine. In PG County, one primary care physician serves 2,020 residents, 71% more than the Maryland average. The county is short, with about 1,050 physicians, including 574 in primary care, and 42% of residents leave the county for treatment. The U.S. needs far more primary care doctors, and PG County is especially underserved. One major reason is that Medicare reimbursement undervalues primary care, creating a lifetime earnings gap that pushes medical students toward specialties. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act deepened the problem by cutting Medicaid reimbursement and limiting student borrowing. Other countries show that universal coverage without enough primary care leads to long waiting times, not better health. My plan starts with co-sponsoring the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2025, which would add 14,000 Medicare-funded residency slots over seven years, with priority for shortage areas like PG County. I would also restore Grad PLUS loans, reform reimbursement to better value primary care, create a stronger payment differential for primary care in Medicaid-heavy communities, and pursue Medicaid-to-Medicare parity for primary care services. I support Medicare for All as the long-term goal, but we must first build the primary care workforce needed to make universal coverage work.

Which committee would you like to serve and how do you envision supporting your district?

I am pursuing five committee assignments; and each one is a direct answer to a specific problem facing MD-04.

- Appropriations; Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development.
- House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform; Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce.
- House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.
- House Committee on Education and the Workforce.
- House Homeland Security Committee.

What is your stance on big business integration with the government and how do you intend to address it?

We are witnessing the clearest merger of private wealth and public power in modern American history. Billionaires are no longer lobbying from the outside; they are inside government, serving in informal advisory roles while holding federal contracts worth billions. I support mandatory lobbying disclosure with real enforcement, stronger cooling-off periods for executive branch officials entering industries they once regulated, and full transparency in federal contracting, including beneficial ownership disclosure. I would also use an Oversight Committee seat to expose conflicts of interest, demand records, and refer to credible violations for investigation. On contracting, I support the Preventing Organizational Conflicts of Interest in Federal Acquisition Act, which would stop contractors from both advising the government on procurement and competing for the resulting contracts. I also support the Expanding Whistleblower Protections for Contractors Act of 2025 and the Federal Advisory Committee Transparency Act.

What is your relationship with unions and intent towards supporting them?

Both of my grandmothers were union members. I did not grow up reading about what unions meant to working families; I grew up seeing it and benefitting from it. I support the PRO Act; the most significant expansion of workers' right to organize in decades; including card check, meaningful penalties for employer interference, and an end to the captive audience meetings that allow employers to coerce workers during organizing drives. I support ending mandatory arbitration clauses that strip workers of their right to collective action.

What is your stance on addressing the rising national debt?

The national debt is real, but much of the debate around it is bad faith. You cannot claim fiscal responsibility while cutting taxes for the wealthy and corporations, weakening IRS enforcement, and then proposing cuts to Medicaid, housing, and education. That is not sound budgeting; it is wealth transfer. The honest place to start is revenue. The gap between taxes owed and taxes collected exceed \$500 billion a year. The answer is not new taxes alone; it is enforcing the taxes already owed. I support restoring and expanding IRS enforcement for high-income individuals and corporations using complex avoidance schemes, along with raising the top marginal tax rate, taxing capital gains as ordinary income above a threshold, a modest financial transaction tax, and closing the carried interest loophole.

On spending, I support a two-year biennial budget cycle with mandatory performance reviews and a mid-cycle correction process. The Biennial Budgeting and Appropriations Act has been introduced on a bipartisan basis several times and would let Congress be appropriate in year one, then use year two for oversight, review, and authorization work. I have eleven years of capital planning experience managing an \$11 billion portfolio at

WMATA, where funding decisions were tied to measurable results and adjusted when performance fell short. The federal government needs the same rigor. Budgets are moral documents, but they also must be management documents. I oppose any austerity framework that cuts programs working families rely on while leaving the tax structures that created the debt untouched. Defense procurement and corporate subsidies should face the same scrutiny as social spending. The Pentagon has failed six consecutive audits, and that is not just a bookkeeping issue; it is an accountability failure that belongs on the Oversight Committee's agenda every session.

Do you see grassroots organizations as helpful, harmful, or neutral? Why?

That framing misses the real question. The issue is not whether grassroots organizations are helpful or harmful in the abstract; it is whether they stay accountable and relevant to the communities they claim to serve. An organization can have the right values and funding but still be disconnected from the people most affected. When that happens, it can absorb resources, occupy political space, and create the appearance of progress without solving the actual problem. Policy should never move in a vacuum. Legislators must stay rooted in organizing networks that reflect real constituent experience, not just advocacy groups whose membership may not match the community in question. Grassroots organizations also have a duty to keep asking whether their priorities are being shaped by the people most affected or by the funding, national agendas, and institutional relationships that can pull them away from the communities they were built to serve.