

Democrat Sarah Riggs Amico goes after religious voters in Georgia

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Mixtures of religion and politics aren't exactly unusual in Georgia, a state situated squarely in the heart of the Bible Belt, where asking someone where they go to church is a common icebreaker.

But this year, no one is combining faith—however broadly defined—and politics as acutely as Sarah Riggs Amico, 40, a newly announced Democratic candidate for US Senate, running to oppose incumbent Republican Sen. David Perdue.

Amico, who lost a 2018 campaign for lieutenant governor, launched her campaign in August with a video that made a direct appeal to religious voters in the state.

"These are times that test our faith, in our beliefs, in our democracy, in each other," Riggs says over footage of faith leaders protesting in Charlottesville, Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and of crowds at a Trump rally chanting "Send her back."

"You don't love the neighbor, if you shun the poor, the powerless, the least of these," she says over images of immigrants in detention centers. "Faith is how I know that nobody should be sick because they're poor, or poor because they're sick. That we need to protect and sustain the earth. That we have an obligation to stand up for economic security and social justice no matter the color of your skin or who you love."

The ad goes on to refer to scripture several times while outlining a decidedly liberal vision for Georgia that showcases implicit support for immigrants, the environment, abortion rights, people of color, and same-sex marriage. The inclusive message is juxtaposed against what she argues are the moral failings of the Trump administration.

Like many Democrats, Amico is careful to note that her embrace of religion is not a call for others to do the same. She noted that her husband is an atheist and that her bigger concern is calling out "basic right and wrong."

Even so, her embrace of religion struck University of Georgia political science professor Charles Bullock as unusual.

“I have not seen ads quite like this from either side,” he said.

But Amico, a businesswoman who describes herself as a newcomer to politics, insisted that the political calculus wasn’t the primary concern when crafting the ad or her campaign message.

“I would be running the same ad if I were running in Alaska or Idaho or Washington or Hawaii or New York,” she said. “It was more about ‘here’s how I see the world, here’s a filter that helps me think about the right and wrong way to treat other people. And here is where I think our leaders have failed us, and specifically David Perdue and the GOP-led US Senate.’”—Religion News Service