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**Candidate Questionnaire for Monroe County  
Auditor's Race**

**About DFMC**

Democracy for Monroe County (DFMC) is a political action committee dedicated to recruiting, training, and supporting fiscally responsible and socially progressive candidates at the local and state levels. DFMC is part of a nationwide coalition of grassroots groups allied with Democracy for America, the political action committee inspired by the presidential campaign of Howard Dean. We meet every first Thursday of the month. For more information about our organization, visit our website at [www.democracyformonroecounty.org](http://www.democracyformonroecounty.org).

*DFMC: Building and training the progressive grassroots.*

**Please return this questionnaire to [robertdeppert@gmail.com](mailto:robertdeppert@gmail.com) and [barkerld@comcast.net](mailto:barkerld@comcast.net) by Monday, March 21.**

**About You**

Name: Catherine (Cathy) Smith

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Website (if available): [www.facebook.com/CathySmithForAuditor/](http://www.facebook.com/CathySmithForAuditor/)

List of your support or campaign committee members:

Campaign Chair:  
Georgia Coutinho

## Question 1

Why are you running for office?

Although I have come a long way implementing progressive ideas and state-of-the-art technology and processes in the Monroe County Treasurer's Office, there is still much work to do in the Monroe County Auditor's Office, as these two offices are integral to each others success. In fact, they MUST work together to insure the best financial position for the County. I would like to have the opportunity to complete my mission and continue to make Monroe County an example of BEST PRACTICES in local government, further building on what I have already developed in the Treasurer's Office. This includes providing friendly and accessible service, wise and transparent financial management, and being a collaborative partner to not only taxpayers, but all internal and external customers.

Obviously I am a strong leader and not afraid to assume the managing reigns of activities or organizations that I believe in. Over and over in my life, I have seen that true leadership is mostly about inspiration and buy-in, as those who chose to follow you want mostly to believe you are capable and fair and that their time, energy, creativity and work will not be wasted on the products and mechanics of your leadership. I prize integrity, fortitude, hard work and placing others before oneself as my core values, which I believe are inherent and sincerely demonstrated in my leadership style and practices.

I am running for office because I believe I can improve services to the public in the Monroe County Auditor's Office by providing the following attributes as a public servant:

- I will be a vibrant and caring advocate of my constituents, the taxpayers, who deserve respect and hard work and will wholeheartedly provide these service-driven attributes in this office.
- I will treat all customers in a welcomed fashion, with dignity and respect, regardless of their ability to pay.
- I will understand and appreciate the fact that customers' time is valuable and seek to serve each in a friendly, efficient and highly reliable manner.
- I will make the operation of essential County accounting procedures more understandable and easier to accomplish.
- I will eliminate confusing documentation and replace this with clearly understandable accounting documents, containing simple language and easily identifiable numerical computations that will allow every stakeholder to quickly check the math and understand how each component was calculated.
- I will seek to educate the public on taxation, deductions and exemptions, so that each taxpayer who qualifies will receive only their fair share of tax burden.
- I will make the investment of county funds completely transparent and provide a quasi-“financial report card” to the public and all elected offices, not just to include a select few on accounting information and knowledge as in the previous administration.
- I will be sensitive to the monetary needs of all tax units in the county and provide excellent service to each in regards to tax advancements and calculation methods.
- I will be kind and considerate to all elected officials, county departments and county personnel and seek to build the best of working relationships.
- I will make all financial decisions wisely.

- I will personally take phone calls from taxpayers, provide answers myself and be available on a regular and convenient schedule to meet with customers, both internal and external to county government.
- I will continue to strive to make the Monroe County Auditor's Office physically accessible to all citizens regardless of disability. This will include counters and service areas.
- I will continue to implement technology to increase the availability of information and service to the office and to the general public.
- I will make the action of completing financial transactions in the Monroe County Auditor's office as easy as possible by implementing up-to-date methodology of sending and receiving payments made by electronic transfers of funds, debt card payments, etc.
- I will always lead by example and be 100% accountable for all my actions as a public official.

## Question 2

List your political experience (here and elsewhere), including any grassroots activity in which you participated or led.

I have served very successfully as the County Treasurer since 1-1-2009. Prior to that, I worked for a socially progressive female in Monroe County Government as the County's Financial Director. I have been active in politics since I was a child when I served as a dancing peanut in Jimmy Carter's campaign. My father was a Union Ironworker whose local fashioned a very elaborate peanut costume and I traveled with the campaign and entertained the crowds.

Since this time, I have helped in every presidential election for Democratic Candidates and this is an accumulated 40+ years of election work. Also, I have worked for progressive Congressional and Senatorial candidates, as well. I ran for city council in 1998 when we lived in North Carolina, but was unable to serve due to a major family emergency. Also, I ran for Van Buren Township Trustee and lost by just 5 votes, in a year of a major recount. My office was not recounted, however I believe I would have gained enough votes to take that office, had it been included in the recount. I am amazing at hard canvassing neighborhoods and making phone calls. I have helped in so many ways, it is even hard to remember all the methods.

It has been my pleasure to support, with either financial contributions or with direct assistance (handing out literature, writing letters, putting up/taking down signs, etc) to their campaign the following women candidates:

- Isabel Piedmont (City Council)
- Susan Sandberg (City Council)
- Regina Moore (City Clerk)
- Val Haughton (Judge)
- Teresa Harper (Judge)
- Amanda Bowlen (Van Buren Township Board)
- Megan Hutchinson (Council)
- Sheilli Yoder (Congress)
- Julie Thomas (County Council)
- Heather Cohee (Township Trustee)
- Elizabeth Cure (Judge)
- Vi Simpson (State Senate)

- Many others at the local, state and national levels

### Question 3

In what way(s) do you consider yourself socially progressive?

**I started actively supporting many socially progressive issues in high school and have continued until today. Of particular interest to me are:**

- Reproductive rights and equal access to all for medical care
- Economic and Educational equality for women
- Complete Equal and Civil Rights for all citizens
- Constitutional Equality for women, including Affirmative action
- Elimination of all violence against women

My Feminist, Progressive stand includes the following:

I strongly support a woman's right to choose what happens to her own body, including abortion, as established by the U.S. Supreme Court in Roe v. Wade.

I strongly support public and private funding for family planning and other reproductive health services for low-income women.

I strongly support economic equality for women and believe that equality of rights under the law should not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or any state based on gender.

I strongly support Civil and Equal Rights are for all citizens regardless of sexual orientation, religion, race, or ethnic background.

I strongly support Constitutional Equality for women and Affirmative Action.

I strongly support the total elimination of violence against women, in the U.S. and in every other country in this world.

I strongly support policies that increase access to quality dependent care and women's health care.

### Question 4

Describe your ideas for engaging citizens in more active participation in our community and our government.

It has been my pleasure to engage citizens actively for most of my life. As the County Treasurer, I hold informational meetings for taxpayers, hand-calculate their tax bills with them so they may understand formulas, components, and calculations. I wait on customers at the counter, and I attend neighborhood association meetings where I answer questions and explain the taxation process to community members. I feel I live to work with the public. I truly love people and want to make the world a better place to live. County Government has not always been easy for me, and many people have said negative things about me to the public, which simply are untrue. I try very hard to only speak positively regarding our democratic office holders and our government in general. I try to focus on the positive, and engage citizens for what I want the world to be and not the negative

environment that some would create. I seek to always make my work environment a place that citizens will feel like they are welcome and wanted. I seek to always remember that taxpayers pay the bills of all governments, at every level. Because of this, my first and foremost responsibility is to be open, honest, and active in relations with our public and actively engage citizens to participate in the civil conversation.

When became County Treasurer in 2008, the Office was run archaically at best. Led by a 20+ year veteran Republican stronghold, she claimed the office from a Republican who had died in office, who ran completely unopposed in several elections, including both the last primary and general elections before my challenge. This empowered the incumbent to successfully be a do-nothing office placeholder, who operated unabated in a grouchy and dare-to-speak-to-me fashion, often in an openly confrontational manner with taxpaying customers. What I have created is an office where the taxpayer is put first and foremost, where they are treated as if they are paying the county's bills and my own personal salary, because they are. They are and will always be treated with respect, kindness and a willingness to go the extra mile to make sure they completely understand the complex venture of property taxation. It is a sincere pleasure to serve our taxpayer and I will always strive to provide excellent customer service at the lowest cost to the taxpayers, period.

**The best method to return confidence and faith is to do a good job, be transparent and be honest. I have no problem and in fact, embrace all of these attributes wholeheartedly.**

Community service is very important to me and I have given of myself in many, significant ways. I have served as the Executive Director of the Hoosier Hills Red Cross and am a 33-year veteran volunteer for this organization, still volunteering actively and donating blood regularly. In the middle 1980's, I participated and technically advised in the first all-women-built Habitat for Humanity house, before the current Women Build program was ever developed. In fact, I was one of the small core group who had to push the project through, as many doubted at that time that it could be accomplished with just women constructing it. Having a female engineer associated with the project, lent credibility and many businesses then signed on to this project they then saw it as doable. I taught women how to pour concrete, set footers, frame, wire, roof, and how to build and install ductwork.

Locally, I helped create an organization similar to Aurora High School called Green County Youth Alternatives. This is an alternative high school, to help educate teenage drop-outs and return them to traditional high-school to graduate. I served on the board there for years. I also hosted a Mother's Day fundraiser for Middle Way House for several years and served as the president of the Women's Auxiliary for the Monroe County Auxiliary Police. United Way (and the United Way Day of Caring) has been a part of my life for many years. I have volunteered, donated, served on the board and been part of user's groups for this non-profit in past years.

### Question 5

Do you pledge to publicly support all Democratic Party nominees, including your primary opponent(s), should he/she prevail in the May Primary Election?

Absolutely, without question!

### Question 6

What do you consider to be the top three duties of the Auditor's Office?

1. Serve as the County's Chief Financial Officer:
  - Accounts' Manager for all County and Statutory Funds
  - Accounts' Receivable Officer for entire County
  - Disbursement Officer for entire County
  - Disbursement of all Payroll and Monetary Benefits, including Federal, State and Payroll taxes.
2. Creation of Taxation Schedule and the Electronic Data, including exemptions and deductions, which allow the Monroe County Treasurer to bill for property tax payments.
3. Serve as the Statutory Secretary to the County Council and the County Commissioners and assist with their development and administration of the annual County budget.

In addition to these three items, revamping the County's current accounting system must be a priority. It is my belief that only the Auditor's Office can make this happen. They are the engine to the Treasurer's caboose. To facilitate real change, the Auditor must be very serious about this activity and take this task at-hand immediately! As Auditor, I promise to personally:

- Provide daily accurate information
- Provide complete and proper documentation
- Properly audit each activity
- Have two sets of eyes on every transaction
- Act humbly, presenting information
- Provide articulate, easily understood reasoning for each transaction
- Transfer information electronically, making public-sharing easy
- Honor Treasurer's Office by understanding their reconciling's contingent upon Auditor's provision of good financial data
- Work closely & collaboratively with Treasurer
- Provided information egolessly and with a true servant's heart
- Eliminate "us verses them" mentality between offices and build solid, trusting working relationships
- Lead with respect and accurate information, kindness, cooperation and complete transparency

## Question 7

What specific plans do you have to fix the beginning of the year payroll problems that have plagued the Auditor's Office for the last two years?

This is so simple, it will sound silly! What we have lacked and what we truly need are two sets of eyes on every transaction. We need to eliminate mistakes by being accurate through validating our data before we put our data into action. How can we do this? By applying best practices to the County's archaic method of accounting. Currently the Auditor hand carries information (often handwritten) to the Treasurer in a sporadic and sometimes "willy-nilly" fashion, making it difficult to navigate or balance. Additionally, current accounting software does not allow each transaction to migrate to the Treasurer as needed. Immediate action is warranted to rectify these inconsistent financial data transfers. We must procure modern accounting software capable of transferring all transactions including EFTs, which represent the current standard of accounting transactions. I will champion the process of implementing an accounting tool that will accurately enable every County transaction to be entered only once -- propagating seamlessly from Auditor to Treasurer, to bank, to cashbook -- making a complete electronic lifecycle.

### **Question 8**

What financial experiences do you have that will assist you with managing and accounting for the County's tax money, and how will you ensure that the tax dollars are spent in a responsible manner?

Currently, I serve as our County Treasurer, where I have used intelligence and foresight to save money and innovate an archaic system of business in property taxation collection and accountability. I have served with integrity and wisdom and sought to collaborate with internal and external partners to establish a set of best practices, implemented these new ideas and set this office on a path of success and viability for the future. Prior to being elected County Treasurer, I served Monroe County as Chief Deputy Auditor under a Democratic woman serving as County Auditor, who obtained this position after many years of Republican control. At this post, I managed a staff whose responsibility included property taxation, the county budgeting process, county-wide accounts payables, receivables, general ledger, payroll, personnel, and grants administration, as well as administrative assistance and clerical services provided to the County Council and County Commissioners. Additionally, I served Monroe County as the county's main Financial Director and this included oversight of their entire non-cash financial operations.

Leadership has been an integral part of my life from high school, through college, in my various career paths and in outside social settings. My career actually started at age 19 (with a college degree) at Bell Labs, the premier research lab in the United States, where the transistor, computer chip, laser, telephone, etc. were all invented. What an honor to be recruited by this institution, which most clearly defined leadership in the field of engineering! This organization was the world's leader in public domain intellectual property production. My employment consisted of the creation of new patents and products and I served as a Lead Project Engineer in the area of consumer products and government electronic systems. Some of my creations are still being refurbished for use for communications equipment.

During my stay at Bell labs, I managed electrical, mechanical and industrial engineers in project work teams. I received my master's degree in mechanical engineering during this time. I probably would have stayed with this company for an entire life work span, but this company was split-up by a federal judge ordering divestiture and we were a casualty. I took a voluntary retirement with 15 years of credited service and Bell Labs secured me a faculty leadership position with the Community

College System of North Carolina. Here, I developed an Industrial Maintenance major and established a new campus at Concord, NC by building a new facility showcasing state-of-the-art industrial training equipment. As a department head in industrial maintenance, I interfaced with many corporations to bring industrial experiences into the classroom and to transfer technology to employers for the purpose of true economic development.

Returning to Indiana, by way of recruitment by Ivy Tech to teach Industrial Maintenance, I served as both faculty member and as the engineer responsible for overseeing the construction of their new campus in Monroe County.

Through the course of my eight-years as Monroe County Treasurer, I have created an office where the taxpayer is put first and foremost, where they are treated as they are paying the County's bills and my own personal salary, because they are. They are and always will be treated with respect, kindness, and a willingness to go the extra mile to make sure they completely understand the complex venture of property taxation. It is a sincere pleasure to serve our taxpayers and I will always strive to provide excellent customer service at the lowest cost to taxpayers, period. I will do so by saving money, being totally transparent, hiring the best talent, working long and hard, using innovation and technology and by being the best County Auditor in the State. I will continue to make my office a model of Best Practices in local government.

I am just a person who knows how to work hard and save money. I grew up with 11 brothers and sisters and feel it is a crime to waste my money or anyone else's. I believe that innovation and improvement leads to saving money and as a candidate who has a master's degree in engineering and attended Wake Forest's Executive MBA program, I doubt one could find a more efficient fiscal preservationist. I take this as a personal challenge and embrace this task! I have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars for Monroe County Government through the use of innovation and technology and I look forward to the opportunity to continue this effort, if elected as Monroe County Auditor.