Alum hopes to make U.S. Senate his next remarkable accomplishment

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U.S. Senate candidate Derrick Edwards, with "Today" show co-host Hoda Kotb, left, and his mother, Madeline Edwards, at Tulane University's 2016 Unified Commencement Ceremony.

Winning a seat in Congress is a steep challenge for any candidate, much less a political newcomer, but Derrick Edwards (BSM ’97, MACCT ’98), who recently announced his candidacy for Louisiana’s U.S. Senate seat, has been defying the odds his entire life.

In 1989, Edwards was paralyzed from the neck down after suffering a spinal cord injury during a high school football game. Despite spending six months in the hospital, including two months in intensive care, Edwards completed his senior year and graduated from high school on time with the rest of his class. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in accounting from Tulane University as well as a law degree from Loyola University. For the past eight years, he's worked as an attorney in New Orleans, handling contracts, insurance and personal injury cases.

"There's no other candidate running for this seat that has both an accounting and law background," Edwards says. "I think I have an advantage over other candidates from an educational standpoint as well as from the things that I have overcome in life. I want to help all Louisiana citizens succeed, much like myself, despite the overwhelming obstacles that Louisiana and our country are dealing with."

Edwards' campaign platform includes improving education, reducing taxes on small businesses and the middle class, cutting wasteful government spending, and reforming health care, which includes care for veterans and people with disabilities.

"I want to put the decision-making power back in the hands of doctors," Edwards says, "not bureaucrats and not insurance companies."

According to Edwards, insurance companies often deny requests for special equipment that disabled individuals need, such as wheelchairs, and the appeal process can take as much as two months.

"That's unacceptable," Edwards says. "I want to work with other senators to expedite the appeals process to 72 hours or less, because when it comes to medical decisions, people's quality of health or even lives could be lost if you're waiting 30 to 60 days for a decision."

While he's running as a Democrat, Edwards says his motivation for serving in Congress has little to do with politics.

"As an attorney, I have the opportunity to make a profound difference in the lives of my clients, one client at a time," he says. "As a U.S. Senator, I'll have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of millions of people in Louisiana and hundreds of millions of people across America. That's the reason I'm running, because together we can and will make Louisiana a place everybody is proud to call home."

For more information about Edwards' campaign, visit www.DerrickEdwards2016.com