



GENERAL SESSION

October 22, 2014

Program Topic: National Congressional Race

Presented by: National Issues

Acting Directors: Melanie Bowen and Kathryn Rowley

U.S. House District 1

Speakers: Donna McAleer (D) – U.S. congressional candidate

Rep. Rob Bishop (R) – U.S. Congressman

Ms. McAleer said she took an oath at age 17 to serve this country because she believed in the freedoms we share and wanted to protect them. She graduated from West Point and was commissioned an officer in the U.S. Army. Her background includes having led soldiers and served as VP of a major technology company. She also rescued a non-profit company that provided access to healthcare for the uninsured. She has coached youth sports and is the mother of a fourth-grade daughter in public school. She stated her experience has provided her with both practical and pragmatic knowledge.

As she travels across Utah, people tell her they are angry at the dysfunction and gridlock in Congress. It's time, she said, to send professional problem solvers to Congress. Ms. McAleer asked, "Why are 82% of legislators always reelected? How can we expect change if we continue to send these career politicians back to Congress?"

Utah has received accolades for its landscape and quality of life. It has been rated the best-managed state. However, two of our cities were rated as the top worst in pay equity for women, and the lowest percentage of women graduating from college (10% below the national average). We have the lowest funded schools and some of the worst air quality. Every single vote matters if we are to change things.

Ms. McAleer said her opponent has been a symbol of obstructionism. He manipulated the rules last October to shut the government down. He also voted against a bipartisan compromise that cost Utah \$30M. She is willing to work on a bipartisan basis. She has served on the Defense Advisory Council on

Women. Individuals finance her candidacy. Not a dime, she said, comes from the state party.

Congressman Bishop said he is optimistic about the future. His committee assignments guarantee he will be able to get things done. He is a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, which enables him to assist Hill Air Force Base. Because of their seniority, he and Utah's other representatives were able to bring 200 jobs re: the F22 fighter to the base.. He emphasized that their efforts were done quietly behind the scenes, not seeking publicity.

Rep. Bishop said an unwise federal budget is "cutting the military to the bone, and reducing our military readiness." He quoted an article that said if we want a diplomatic solution, we need a military to back it up." He wants to return to Congress to prevent further cuts in the military.

He expects to be made chairman of the Resource Committee in January and has proposed the *Eastern Utah Public Lands Initiative*, hoping to build a consensus among stakeholders in eastern Utah to designate lands for recreation and development

Rep. Bishop's then addressed the concept of Federalism, or proper relationship between federal and state government. He quoted James Wilson who said, "If they (federal & state governments) stay like the solar system in their patterns and spheres of rotation then everything will work well together. But if one tries to act like a comet and crashes through those spheres, then chaos will be in its wake." That, he warned, is what we are seeing today.

Reported by Stuart Gygi

U.S. House District 2

Speakers: Congressman Chris Stewart (R) – U.S. Congressman

Sen. Luz Robles (D) – Dist. 1, Salt Lake County; congressional candidate

Congressman Stewart said National security will always be the country's top priority. In his visits throughout the Middle East, he is always asked, "Where is the U.S.? We don't know if we can count on you any longer." If we withdraw our influence from the world, he continued, we leave it a much darker and more dangerous place. Once he was training an inexperienced pilot in a military helicopter when they encountered winds at speeds of 50-100 mph. Thinking the new pilot would eventually notice the problem, he asked Air Traffic Control to give them a ground speed check. They reported the helicopter was going 20 knots *backward*. Finally the young pilot realized they were going nowhere. Rep. Stewart likened this to what is happening in the country. We are being blown backwards. How can we be satisfied with the progress we are making? He addressed specific things he thought important.

One concern is our national debt and spending. We may commit national suicide with debt. A nation can destroy itself if it continues to buy whatever is on its 'wants list' and refuses to pay for it. He praised the Paul Ryan/Patty Murray budget.

Another concern is the prevalence of regulatory agencies. Congressmen and presidents can be voted out of power, but not the regulatory agencies. They are the most everlasting authority in Washington. They have enormous power and are a \$1.6T – \$1.8T dead weight dragging on our economy.

Sen. Robles entered the race because Utah's representation should be more reflective of how Utah is changing. She criticized the Republican legislature for gerrymandering the congressional districts. All four districts have a Republican majority of at least

18%. Also of concern is that a very small number of voters are participating. Utah is 47th in the nation. It used to be third. What has changed? There has been a big change in the way the state does business. There should be a partnership between local, state and federal government. The federal government has an important role in equality for women, people of color, and immigration. It should play a minimal role in education, but Title I money is still important.

She quipped that Congress is a place where a person can be incompetent and still get paid. Sen. Robles knows she can accomplish change there, as she had done in Utah for six years in the state senate, one of only five Democrats there.

Campaign financing remains a problem in our system. She believes Utah gets an "F" for its campaign finance laws, which place no limits on individual contributions. On a national level, Super PACs are able to circumvent most rules. Sen. Robles decided to accept only limited PAC money. 98% of her contributions are from individuals; 96% of those are from Utah.

Common Core standards are not a federal government program. They came out of the National Governor's Association. Utah's governor was chairman of the Association when the standards were released. The federal government has used the standards for some grant money for some schools, but it is not a blanket requirement. Additional resources are still needed. Class size is a critical issue. More proactive school boards and more parent participation are important. Parent participation, like voter turnout, is too low in our state.

Reported by Stuart Gygi

U.S. House District 3

Speakers: Leslie Jones – speaking for Congressman Jason Chaffetz (R) –

U.S. Congressman

Brian Wonnacott (D) – U.S. congressional candidate

Leslie Jones, campaign manager for Rep. Jason Chaffetz, stated that Rep. Chaffetz continues to buck the odds. From the 2-4% poll numbers before the Republican Convention in 2008, he made it to the primary election and then won the November election by a wide margin. Now, 12 years later, he is expecting to be called as Chairman of the House Oversight Committee. It is rare for a 3-term

congressman to be appointed chair of such a committee. It speaks to his ability to lead and form relationships with his colleagues. As a chairman, he will work with other chairpersons and the House leadership in helping to shape the legislative agenda while the Republicans are in the majority.

In a time when many say you can't negotiate and compromise without violating principals, Rep. Chaffetz has been able to reach across the aisle. He looks to find common ground and discover solutions. He worked after his election to get rid of many wasteful earmarks.

Rep. Chaffetz was elected in 2008 on a platform containing four main principals: Fiscal discipline, limited government, accountability and a strong national defense. As a sub-committee chair of the Homeland Security Committee, he is involved in investigating waste and fraud, and advancing investigations into several high profile situations including Benghazi, and the Secret Service.

Brian Wonnacott spoke about his concern for air quality, climate change and energy policy. These interwoven problems are all related to burning coal, oil and gas. Air pollution is one of Utah's most serious problems affecting quality of life. "Grey Air" is due to inadequate regulation and enforcement. We must burn less gas. We cannot improve air quality without changing individual behavior. There is no magic solution. He urged driving more efficient cars and use public transportation when we can.

Climate change is still being debated. The Chairman of General Motors gave an hour-long interview trying to make the case that the science on the issue is not in. If you believe climate change is a farce, Mr.

U.S. House District 4

**Speakers: Doug Owens (D) – Radio talk show host; congressional candidate
Mia Love (R) – Mayor of Saratoga Springs; congressional candidate**

Mr. Owens sees this campaign being about three issues: (1) Helping hard-pressed middle class families, (2) working to improve quality of life in Utah, and (3) getting Congress back to work in a reasonable fashion to find common-sense solutions to the problems we face.

Over the past six years, one in five middle-class families have lost their place in the middle-class of this country. Education can be the biggest help to change this. Better funding is important. In particular, we need to maintain the 12% of funding our schools get from national sources. Funding for students to gain access to college should be maintained. Local control of schools is best. We don't need the federal government telling us how to educate our children. Many students are struggling with excessive loans. There should be ways to lower the interest on these loans. The cost of education needs to be reduced. He suggested going after some predatory private schools that get students to max out

Wonnacott said, you have been manipulated by a public relations campaign. The science, he argued, is in. We must address climate change immediately. Meanwhile, politicians continue to pander to the uninformed rather than becoming informed.

He believes, half of the oil that ever was is gone. We cannot solve our energy crisis by drilling for more. It is like saying eating ice cream will create more ice cream. Fracking has produced an abundance of natural gas, but even this supply will diminish in five to fifteen years. We must support research into renewables and alternatives to oil. We must make incentives to encourage everyone to be more energy efficient. The next ten years are critical.

Mr. Wonnacott understands suspicion of the federal government. We must always be vigilant to prevent government overreach. Government policies must constantly be revisited for cost and effectiveness. However, there is a tendency to believe that because someone is struggling, they are not deserving of our help. We must stop treating the disadvantaged with disrespect and treat them with the same respect we would give a friend or neighbor. We must stop ignoring the problems confronting us and take responsibility to make a difference. Politicians must stop political posturing, fakery and deceit, and start to address the real problems with courage and imagination.

Reported by Stuart Gygi

their loans, but don't give them an education that leads anywhere.

He wishes to continue the work his father, Wayne Owens, did in Congress in reaching bipartisan agreements that affect Utah. His father worked with Sen. Orin Hatch on the *Downwinders* legislation and with Sen. Jake Garn on the *Central Utah Project*.

The issue of Social Security does not require radical solutions, such as privatization. If the surplus were not being used for other debts, it would be solvent for another 20 years. One thing that would help to extend its solvency would be to give people incentives to work a little longer. This could happen with small incremental changes.

Mia Love talked about the lessons her parents taught her that she has applied in her life. As a council member and mayor in Saratoga Springs, she worked to balance the budget every year by applying principles of fiscal discipline, limited government and

personal responsibility. Before making a commitment to spend, she always asked, “Is it affordable. Is it sustainable, and is it my job?” She tried to make sure the city wasn’t making decisions for just the next four years, but rather for the next 40 – 50 years.

Ms. Love gave two reasons why she is a candidate. First, when you work in the private sector, sometimes you work for someone else and sometimes they work for you. But in the public sector, you always work for the people. She believes Washington D.C. has forgotten that. Sometimes they think the people belong to the government. We need to make the government understand it belongs to the people.

To explain the second reason she is running, she described how her parents told her when she started law school that they had done everything they could to get here there. Now, she would not be a burden to

society. She could give back. She has tried to teach her children the same principle. Her greatest fear is that when her kids reach the same point in life, society will have placed an impossible burden of debt on them.

Education should be locally controlled. Ms. Love trusts Utah parents and Utah teachers to do what’s best for Utah students. The best government is closest to the people. Federal money in education comes with too many strings attached, making it more difficult to educate our children. She wants to eliminate those strings. We should reduce the disparities between the salaries of Utah teachers and those in Washington. We also need to reject the one-size-fits-all programs that encumber our best teachers.

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Extra Topic: “How judges are Chosen and Retained”

Speaker: Joanne Stotinki – Exec. Dir., Utah Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission

The Commission was set up by the legislature to provide an independent body to evaluate judges and provide information to voters. The Commission consists of four persons appointed by the governor, four by the legislature, and four by the Supreme Court. No more than two of each four appointees can be from the same political party and no more than half of the 12 members can be lawyers. Ms. Stotinki considers it a very good nonpartisan body.

Each judge is evaluated twice during a six-year term. The first evaluation is for self-improvement, and goes only to the judge, the presiding judge of the district, and the administrative judge. It shows the judge how he/she can improve. The second evaluation is made near the end of the six-year term. The Commission uses this evaluation to vote on whether or not to recommend the judge for retention.

The evaluations are based on surveys of attorneys, court staff, juvenile court professionals (people in and out of the court,) and jurors. In addition, citizens are trained in courtroom procedure to be court observers. They write narrative reports on what they saw and how it made them feel. The reports describe the fairness of the proceedings. The Commission is looking for volunteers for this program.

The Commission then uses all this information in the evaluation process. The information is available to the public through the Voter Information Pamphlet, through the vote.utah.gov website (click on “Know Your Judge”) and on the judges.utah.gov website (click on “Your County”).

Reported by Stuart Gygi

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