

LOCAL



EMILY WEAVER / HERALD
Congressman Patrick McHenry says U.S. should stay in Iraq. Challenger Richard Carsner, below, says it's time to pull out.

Candidates differ on whether U.S. should stay in Iraq

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The Candidate Forum for the U.S. Congress House of Representatives District 10 was the last forum held in Mildred H. Keeter Auditorium at Cleveland Community College Thursday night. Representing the democratic party, Richard Carsner went head to head with Republican incumbent Patrick McHenry answering many questions and giving their stances on current local and national issues.

Moderator Steve Thornburg asked the candidates whether they believed the United States should stay in Iraq or withdraw. "The only recipe for us in Iraq is success. The only way we can get our troops home is through victory," McHenry said. "We're fighting not a war on terror and not a war against traditional weapons, but a war against Islamic extremists. Those who tend to do us harm for an ideological hatred." He stressed that it is imperative to stay in Iraq and finish what has been started.

Carsner said that America needs to let the Iraqis start taking care of their own responsibilities. "We have been there long enough. We have guided them and they have not responded," he said. Since there has been much turmoil in Iraq for many years, he proposed that the country divide itself into three "semi-autonomous regions" with a centralized government. "Let the government handle things like border security, foreign policy and oil revenues. Get the people in areas where they can get along with each other. As long as the Sunnis and Shiites are together, they're going to continue to kill people," Carsner said, adding that a time table needs to be set and a withdrawal of our troops put in motion.

In regards to the Patriot Act, McHenry said that he voted to reauthorize it because, "In this time of war we need to have all the abilities possible to seek out terrorist activity." He explained that the more we know, the better prepared we can be. Carsner said that America should not forget "our constitutional freedoms and constitutional rights." He said that he is concerned about laws being passed that gives the government an open-door opportunity to infringe on a person's constitutional rights. There must be another way, he said.

McHenry proposed the idea of private savings accounts to combat the foreboding problems with Social Security. Carsner disagreed. "Social Security can be fixed by raising the cap, raising the early retirement age by a year to a year and a half, and increasing withholding by about a quarter of a percent, which would only cost the average working American an extra \$3-5 a month," he said.

See Congress, 6A



State House hopefuls discuss Medicaid, ethics, tax issues

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Mud was flying and fingers were pointing at Thursday night's Forum in Cleveland Community College's Mildred H. Keeter Auditorium. The last of two candidate forums, it was held to give the voting public a closer look at the individuals running for a seat in the State House of Representatives, among other positions.

The current representative for Cleveland County, NC (District 111), is Tim Moore (R). He is running this year against democratic opponent Betsy H. Fonvielle.

Fonvielle said that she believes the new ethics law that was passed by the General Assembly this past session is a good start. But more work is needed to keep the politicians honest. "I think there are issues that they still have not addressed, that it is not as tight as it should be, specifically some of the campaigning issues," she said.

Moore said that he served as the chair for the House Committee on Elections Law and Campaign Finance Reform. "We dealt with a number of these changes this year," he said. "Essentially what the changes involved were changes to the reporting requirements on money, bans on lobbyists giving legislators gifts, and also additional changes with respect to the influence involvement of 527 groups." These groups are independent of candidates or parties that will get involved in a race and attempt to influence legislation, he added. Moore said that money is the root of evil in politics and more steps should be taken to reign in the power of that money.

The Medicaid issue is a growing concern for county budgets and especially for Cleveland County, which has had to allocate 11 percent of this year's budget to the program. "We're going to have to deal with Medicaid this year. It's going to break our state if we don't. It's growing at a larger rate than our population, than the rate of inflation and even our budget as a whole," Moore said. North Carolina is the only state that even requires counties to pay for any part of Medicaid, he said, adding that the burden should be put with the state. "How do we reduce the costs? Number 1, illegal immigrants should not be getting Medicaid benefits period. It's happening in North Carolina. It's happening in Cleveland County and we know it's occurring. The first thing we need to do is stop that," Moore said through fevered voice and hand gestures. "These aren't tax-paying citizens. They shouldn't be receiving tax-payer's subsidized services."

He added that the Medicaid criteria needs to be amended. "Those who are able to work who are not disabled should not be drawing Medicaid or any type of Welfare. If they're able-bodied,



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Incumbent Tim Moore, left, and challenger Betsy Fonvielle address the questions in the North Carolina State House candidate forum Thursday at Cleveland Community College.

ied, they should get a job," he said, adding that there are holes in the system and waste that needs cleaning up.

Fonvielle agreed that Medicaid is a problem for Cleveland County. "Our per capita income is below the state average but we have greater than average needs. So it's a bigger burden for us than it is for some of the other counties," she said, adding that it needs to be taken over by the state. "At the state level, they have to look into how the Medicaid funds are being paid and whether they're being used properly. Whether there are needs that can be taken to alleviate the Medicaid burden on the state."

Moore said that taxes in North Carolina are too high. Tax foundation has rated us the 11th highest taxed state, he said. "There is really no justification for it," he stated. "We have a lot of companies that choose not to locate here because of our taxes." He said that he signed a promise during his last two terms that he would not vote for any tax increases and has kept that pledge. "People need to be able to keep more of their money, not the government."

Fonvielle said that our effective tax rates in North Carolina

are not that high. "I don't think our taxes are keeping businesses out of North Carolina. I have always tried to keep taxes low when I served on the Shelby City Council we never raised taxes," she said. "My pledge to the people of Cleveland County is to try to keep taxes as low as possible. I also don't believe in taking a pledge that you will not raise taxes because our government costs go up," Fonvielle said.

In regards to private property being taken for economic development, she said that private property should be controlled by the private owner. But in some cases of public domain, property can be taken for roads and other public uses. Moore said that the right to own property is a fundamental core of our society and private property should be protected from a governmental grasp.

During part II of the forum, candidates were allowed to ask one question of their choice to their opponents. Fonvielle asked Moore about why he voted for legislation requiring proof of identification to vote at the polls. "I did support that bill because right now, our system is ripe for fraud," he said. Someone could go to the Board of Elections and falsely represent themselves in

order to vote and when the person whose true identity was taken goes to the polls, he or she cannot vote, he said in his defense. Moore asked Fonvielle, "If elected this fall, will you vote for or will you support the constitutional amendment that defines marriage as the union between one man and one woman only, thereby prohibiting in this state, gay marriages and civil unions?"

Evading the answer and causing a stir in Moore, she replied, "We have a law on the North Carolina books that states that marriage is between one man and one woman at one time. I think that's sufficient."

The lawyer in Moore could not help but accuse Fonvielle of supporting gay marriage in his closing statement. Laughing and shaking her head in disbelief while he spoke, she spent the first part of her closing statement saying that she was not a supporter of gay marriage.

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