

Tarkanian, Lee sole congressional opponents at wide-ranging candidate forum

By Yvonne Gonzalez Thursday, Oct. 18, 2018

The lone Republican congressional candidate at a bipartisan forum said he would support five-year funding for a program included in Obamacare.

Republican Danny Tarkanian and Democrat Susie Lee are running for Nevada's Congressional District 3, currently a blue seat held by Senate candidate Rep. Jacky Rosen. Senate, congressional, gubernatorial and legislative candidates were invited to the Thursday night forum hosted by Nevadans for the Common Good, a group mostly made up of religious leaders, at West Preparatory Academy.

Congressional candidates Lee, Tarkanian, incumbent Democrat Dina Titus, and former Rep. Steven Horsford were asked whether they'd support returning to Obamacare's five-year funding cycle for Federally Qualified Health Centers, up from the two-year schedule in use under the GOP administration. These centers provide primary care services in underserved areas.

On whether he'd support increased funding and a five-year cycle for the centers, Tarkanian said, "Absolutely ... it's the right way to go."

Lee said the centers fill a need for underinsured individuals, with gaps in Medicaid and other types of insurance. She said she'd fight to see they are fully funded under a five-year program.

The group also asked congressional candidates whether they would hold a hearing in Nevada on slow-downs in the citizenship process. Speaker Agatha Ramirez said a process that took her five months in 2012 is taking more than 15 months today.

Lee said the Trump administration is making it more difficult for people to immigrate "the right way," putting up barriers and scaring would-be applicants with detention should they be denied. Tarkanian said the process should be improved for people who want to "do it the right way."



Democratic candidates, including from left, state Sen. Mo Denis, U.S. Senate candidate Rep. Jacky Rosen, and congressional candidates Steven Horsford, Rep. Dina Titus, and Susie Lee watch as faith leaders and nonprofit groups that are part of Nevadans for the Common Good introduce themselves at a candidate forum on Oct. 18, 2018.

Rosen faces incumbent GOP Sen. Dean Heller, who was not at the forum. A representative of Nevadans for the Common Good said the group was unable to reach Heller himself, and his campaign did not definitively answer whether he would be able to attend.

Heller and Rosen are set to debate Friday night on KLAS Channel 8. Rosen said she wants to discuss health care, Social Security, Medicare, veterans and “of course” Yucca Mountain. She said the proposal to store nuclear waste in Nye County is a deciding factor for Nevada voters, and that she’d continue to oppose the project if elected.

Heller has criticized Rosen as a newcomer to Congress who would be less effective at blocking Yucca Mountain project funding in the Senate. Rosen said it’s a GOP administration that wants a Republican Congress to start putting dollars toward the project after money was choked off under the Obama administration.

“It’s just a bait and switch,” Rosen said of Senate GOP leadership. “They’re going to get Dean Heller elected and then they’re going to do what they want. They’re going to proceed on it right after the midterms. There’s only one way to stop it. It’s with a Democratic senator.”

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Steve Sisolak said he would protect the state’s Medicaid expansion under Obamacare, which increased Nevada’s insured population by roughly 200,000.

Sisolak also said he supports education funding and wants to keep the state’s Commerce Tax in place to continue generating revenue for schools. GOP opponent Adam Laxalt opposes the tax and supports voucher programs such as Education Savings Accounts, which supporters say offer choice and opponents say take money away from public schools.

Laxalt declined to attend, said Barbara Paulsen, volunteer leader with Nevadans for the Common Good, but she said he did sit down with some of the group’s representatives and while he was supportive of education funding, his position was unclear on whether he would support the Medicaid expansion if elected.

Also in attendance was Republican Assembly candidate Stephen Sedlmeyer, who ran for Clark County Commission in 2016 and faces Democrat Selena Torres this year. He said he also supports Education Savings Accounts as a way to give parents options, and said these programs do not take money from public education.

“It’s a fallacy to say that they’re stealing from the school district if they want ESAs going to a child that’s outside the school district,” he said. “Where does that money come from? It comes from the state, and where’s the state getting that money, from the parent who’s paying their taxes. So they want their taxes to go toward their child to go to a school of their choice.”

Democrats Craig Jordahl, District 12 candidate, Sen. Mo Denis, District 2, Assemblywoman Dina Neal, District 7, Howard Watts III, Assembly District 15 candidate, Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson, District 17, and Assemblywoman Ellen Spiegel, District 20, also attended.

Sedlmeyer and Tarkanian were the only Republicans at the event. The Assembly candidate said he’s familiar with Horsford and some of the other Democrats, and officials can’t just see each other as enemies.

“I’m not afraid to talk to anybody,” Sedlmeyer said.