

Candidates state case for election inside packed Pima County forum



Candidates state case for election inside packed Pima County forum

By [Evan Schreiber](#) | September 30, 2018 at 8:48 PM MST - Updated October 1 at 8:43 PM

TUCSON, AZ (Tucson News Now) - In a gym crowded with more than 6-hundred vibrant voters, some kept just their eyes and ears open.

Beth Koontz sat in the bleachers on the St. Pius X Catholic Church grounds Sunday afternoon, Sept. 30, near Speedway Boulevard and Pantano Road, diligently taking notes and listening to what was being said.

She was one of the few to also bring along her child, hearing issues that affected him.

“She wants to know what’s happening and she wants to help change the community in a positive way,” 10-year-old Colt Koontz said, sitting next to his mother.

Beth and Colt were among the roughly 640 people who had gathered to have their voices heard and hear the voices of their candidates.

The [Pima County Interfaith Council \(PCIC\)](#) hosted the Accountability Session 2018.

“I’m a big believer in our Democratic process,” Beth said. “I want my kids to be active and involved and know that they need to gather information before they go to the polls.”

Information was gathered from our U.S. Congressional and Arizona House of Representative candidates.

The candidates invited to participate in Sunday’s forum included:

U.S. Representative in Congress - District No. 2

- [Ann Kirkpatrick \(DEM\)](#)

State Representative - District No. 10

- [Todd Clodfelter \(REP\)](#)
- [Domingo Degrazia \(DEM\)](#)

- [Kirsten Engel \(DEM\)](#)

State Representative - District No. 2

- [John Christopher Ackerley \(REP\)](#)
- [Anthony Sizer \(REP\)](#)
- [Rosanna Gabaldon \(DEM\)](#)
- [Daniel Hernandez \(DEM\)](#)

Members of the PCIC Executive Team said they extended an invite multiple times to US Congressional Candidate [Lea Marquez Peterson](#), the Republican challenger to Kirkpatrick, to participate in Sunday's forum. The PCIC Executive Team said Marquez Peterson chose not to attend and did not give them a reason for not participating.

Candidates faced questions, given to them prior to Sunday's event, on the topics of education, healthcare, and jobs.

They answered in support, mostly, in front of a powerful group that got them all in one room.

According to Elaine Jones, a member of the PCIC Executive Team, their council represents roughly 40,000 people among 30 faith-based organizations.

"There's two kinds of power, as we believe," Jones told Tucson News Now. "One is money and one is people. We don't have much money. We have a lot of people."

There were attentive people, too.

People like Beth Koontz, who moved back to Tucson from the area of Washington, D.C., returned to find a floundering school system for Colt, who she now homeschools.

"I was surprised and disappointed and saddened. I mean, I had a great education from the state of Arizona. I really have great memories and I enjoyed it and I went to the University of Arizona. But when I came back and we started to look around at our options, there was a lot of overcrowding and people just seemed to be unhappy with the situation," Beth said. She wants these candidates to turn the system around.

On May 3, 2018, following a massive teacher walkout in Arizona, Governor Doug Ducey signed the [#20x2020 plan](#) into law, providing a 20 percent increase in teacher pay by school year 2020. School districts in Arizona have the flexibility to allocate these new dollars to meet the specific needs of their district, the Governor's website stated.

Any promises made by the candidates Sunday night for a better educational system left Beth skeptical.

"I would've appreciated it a little bit more if people didn't just tell me what they thought I wanted to hear -- if they told me the actual truth. What do they think? What do they think they can get done? Or what do they really need in order to get that bill passed through?" she said, when asked if anything surprised her at the forum.

The powerful people promise to keep them honest, according to Nancy Smith, a member of the PCIC Executive Team.

"But, since we are going to visit with whoever wins the election and try and hold them accountable and revisit these issues and remind them of what they said to us, we'll know."

Copyright 2018 Tucson News Now. All rights reserved.

<https://www.tucsonnewsnow.com/2018/10/01/candidates-state-case-election-inside-packed-pima-county-forum/>