

March 11, 2016 — (Hamilton) The 2016 Mercer County Republican Committee convention featured an exciting mix of experience and youth and that could not be more apparent than in the two candidates nominated for the United States Congress.

Chris Smith — seeking his 19th term in the Fourth District — has been serving since 1981 and was been a champion of human rights — recently sponsoring a bill to address the "Genocide" in Syria and other parts of the Middle East.

<http://chris-smith.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=398771>

On the other end of the spectrum East Windsor resident Steven Uccio — in his first congressional campaign — will challenge Bonnie Watson-Coleman (D) for the 12th District seat after edging Robert Shapiro in a tightly-contested vote.

A long-time Democratic party figure in New Jersey state politics, Watson-Coleman is completing her first term in Congress after succeeding Rush Holt in the 12th District. Watson-Coleman has been a reliable vote for the Obama administration and was one of several Democrats to boycott a speech by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in March of 2015.

Smith was introduced to the crowd at the Stone Terrace by John Henry in Hamilton by Hamilton Township Mayor Kelly Yaede. During his presentation he highlighted his efforts in areas such as human trafficking and fiscal responsibility. Smith also emphasized the importance of electing a Republican president in 2016.

The Mercer County committee had supporters for three of the four remaining Republican candidates — and thus did not endorse anyone — but Smith pointed out that electing either Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders would be a mistake.

"I served in the House with Bernie Sanders. I know him," said Smith. "I know what he is about. That's not the person we want to be president."

Born in New York City before growing up in Millstone, NJ and graduating from Allentown High School, the 30-year-old Uccio — who first ran for the

New Jersey General Assembly as a Libertarian in 2013 — has shown promise since becoming a Republican.

Despite being heavily out-spent by their opponents in the 2015 race for township council in heavily-Democrat East Windsor, Uccio (pronounced You See OH) and his running mates made significant gains.

Uccio faces a similar challenge in the heavily-funded Watson-Coleman. According to the Federal Election Commission the first-term congresswoman had received over \$430,000 in contributions in 2015.

Uccio is confident that the voters of the 12th District have had enough of the big government, high tax policies of the last eight years and are seeking a change.

"The purpose of government is to ensure our rights and to protect us from invasion," said Uccio in his platform. "It's job is not to protect us from ourselves. Individuals, not government, should decide how they should live their lives, and accept the consequences of those decisions. I reject the idea that government must control people for their own good."

The theme of experience plus youth was also reflected in the speakers and members on hand.

Former Hamilton mayor Jack Rafferty addressed the crowd and talked about the importance of party unity while former state senator Peter Inverso and one-time Hopewell mayor James Burd were also in attendance. Princeton's Scott Siprelle addressed the crowd in support of John Kasich.

At the other end of the spectrum were up-and-coming young Republicans like Kyle Battaglia, who addressed the convention in support of Donald Trump and Trenton's Anthony Giordano — a recent candidate for the House of Representatives who spoke on behalf of Ted Cruz. West Windsor councilman Peter Mendonez, Jr., the youngest elected Republican office holder in Mercer County, was also on hand.

On the county level the MCRC selected Hamilton resident Andrew P. Curcio and Jason DeFrancesco of Hopewell to run for the two open spots on the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Robbinsville resident David Boyne was nominated to oppose long-time Mercer County Surrogate Diane

Gerofsky.

The currently all-Democrat freeholder board recently voted to give themselves, Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes and Gerofsky and other county officials four percent raises.

That vote came on the same night that Hughes announced a proposal to lay off up to 300 employees at the Mercer County Correctional facility in a deal negotiated with Hudson County.

Curcio is a lifelong resident of the area — growing up in Hamilton and attending then-McCorristin Catholic. He received an Associates Degree in Humanities and Social Sciences and currently works for the State of New Jersey.

DeFrancesco studied at Florida State University and taught Chemistry before attending the Albany Law School. He is currently a patent attorney at Baker and Rannells, PA.

Boyne, a long-time councilman in Robbinsville, has spent the last decade as the Chief Financial Officer for Home Delivery America, working closely with company chairman and CEO Richard Merians. During his time in Robbinsville he developed a reputation for focusing on fiscal responsibility and cost management.