

House Candidates Take On Issues At Chamber Forum

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

The Kodiak Chamber of Commerce sponsored a candidate forum last night (Tuesday) so voters could get to know the candidates vying for the state House of Representatives seat representing District 36, which includes the Kodiak Island Borough and parts of the Lake and Peninsula Borough. KMXT's Casey Kelly has more.

Former state lawmaker Alan Austerman is running unopposed in the Republican Party primary. In November, he'll face either Dave Kaplan or Andy Lundquist, who are running against each other in the Democratic primary, which will be held next Tuesday. During opening statements, Austerman, the only one of the three who's held public office before, touted his experience.

(Austerman 1 :45s "and representation that it deserves.")

Kaplan said his platform is based on the issues that people in Kodiak have told him are the most important to them.

(Kaplan 1 :27s "and families, seniors and commerce.")

Lundquist said his candidacy aims to end politics as usual.

(Lundquist 1 :17s "and proud to be called Alaskans.")

Fisheries issues are always important to Kodiak voters, and each candidate had a similar response to a question Moderator John Whiddon posed about how they would go about educating legislators from other parts of the state about the fisheries and their importance to people in Kodiak. Lundquist said he would start by trying to get on the Natural Resources and Fisheries committees in the state house.

(Lundquist 2 :16s "and the perspective from Kodiak.")

Kaplan said he would invite legislators from interior Alaska to come to Kodiak and witness our fisheries first hand.

(Kaplan 2 :11s “…to what their issues are.”)

Austerman said that when he served in the state legislature before he had hosted lawmakers from other areas of the state to help them understand Kodiak’s fisheries and how they are managed.

(Austerman 2 :27s “…process that you go through.”)

The forum featured very little in the way of disagreement or debate. For instance, on energy policy all three said they support renewable energy projects. All three candidates also came out in favor of more stable funding for education.

One area of disagreement came on the issue of Ballot Measure 3, which would provide public financing for elections. Kaplan strongly supports the measure; Lundquist is opposed to it; Austerman didn’t give a position one way or the other on the initiative, but says he’d abide by it if voters pass it.

A listener phoned in a question asking what each candidate thought defined them as either a Democrat or a Republican. Lundquist answered his support for the working class.

(Lundquist 3 :21s “…time for a change in this state.”)

Kaplan also mentioned change and said he supports the middle class.

(Kaplan 3 :12s “…and all the people of Alaska.”)

Austerman touted his moderate stance on issues and areas where he disagrees with mainstream Republicans.

(Austerman 3 :31s “…pretty middle of the road.”)

Next Tuesday’s primary election is when Democrats will decide between Lundquist and Kaplan. Whoever wins will face Austerman in the general election November 4th. The House District 36 seat currently belongs to Gabrielle LeDoux, who is not seeking re-election so she can concentrate on her run for U-S House of Representatives against Alaska Congressman Don Young.

I’m Casey Kelly.