Austerman, Lundquist Spar Over Rationalization

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

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The two candidates for Kodiak’s lone seat in the state House of Representatives, Alan Austerman and Andy Lundquist, squared off in a forum that aired live on KMXT last night. KMXT’s Casey Kelly reports.

The forum was significantly sharper in tone than the previous meeting of state house candidates, prior to the August primary, when Austerman, the lone Republican took on Lundquist and fellow Democrat Dave Kaplan. During opening statements, Austerman wasted no time criticizing radio ads that his opponent is running on commercial radio stations in Kodiak.

(Austerman 1 :14s “…advertising in a local election.”)

Lundquist used his opening statement to tout his background in business and as a certified public accountant.

(Lundquist 1 :32s “…halibut

commercially for years.”)

Moderator John Whiddon asked questions, including some from members of the live audience at the borough assembly chambers. On construction of a new Kodiak High School building, both candidates agreed that the state should pick up more of the tab for new school construction. Both also agreed that there should be an inter-island ferry that services more of Kodiak’s village communities.

The two differed when asked to define rationalization programs. Austerman went first.

(Austerman 2 :48s “…rationalization is a bad word.”)

But Lundquist said in his view, rationalization is never a good thing.

(Lundquist 2 :31s “…to the people in this state.”)

The topic came up again when the candidates were allowed to question each other at the mid-point of the debate. Lundquist questioned what Austerman had done, as Governor Frank Murkowski’s fisheries policy advisor, to oppose Crab Rationalization at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Austerman answered that the program was implemented under the administration of Democratic Governor Tony Knowles.

(Austerman 3 :22s “…my watch as fishery advisor.”)

Lundquist’s second question to Austerman had to do with Pebble Mine, which the Republican recently told the Kodiak Daily Mirror he was on the fence about. Austerman defended the remark, but qualified it by saying he’s against any mine that harms the Bristol Bay region’s fishery resource.

(Austerman 4 :19s “…what’s gonna take place in Pebble.”)

Austerman asked Lundquist about a federal and state managed fisheries program known as Community Quota Entity, which helps communities purchase halibut and sablefish quotas. Lundquist said he wasn’t familiar with the program, but if it was anything like the Community Development Quota program he would have issues with it. Austerman also asked Lundquist how he planned to get things done in Juneau if he were a member of the minority party and whether he would consider joining a bipartisan coalition.

(Lundquist 3 :30s “…but they might not too.”)

Moderator Whiddon asked each candidate what committees they’d like to be on if elected. Austerman said he would take his previous experience as a state lawmaker in Juneau during the late 90s and early 2000s and seek a leadership position in the state house. If he didn’t get that he said he’d like to be on the finance or fisheries committees. Lundquist said he’d look to get on the resource, fisheries, or finance committees.

During closing statements Austerman again touted his experience, characterizing Lundquist as inexperienced. Lundquist listed a series of policy goals he’d have, including helping the state build a natural gas pipeline, school funding and a comprehensive alternative energy policy.

The state house race is on the ballot at next week’s November 4th election.

I’m Casey Kelly.

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