


# As Dems Vie for Markey's Congressional Seat, Personality Is Key

With so many excellent liberal candidates running in the special election primary for former Congressman Edward Markey's old seat, I was having trouble deciding whom to vote for. So I decided to attend an event held last Sunday at  Temple Emunah, in Lexington, at which , seven Democratic candidates expressed their views on gun control, the economy, gay marriage, immigration reform, the Middle East, and the general state of affairs—each in 60 seconds.

The Republican candidates were invited, according to the moderator, but apparently were all attending another event.

The speakers included, from left to right in the photo, left: State Senator William Brownsberger, State Senator Katherine Clark, Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, Martin Long, Paul John Maisano, State Representative Carl Sciortino, and State Senator Karen Spilka.

I was impressed with all of the candidates. While they agreed on nearly all counts—on nearly all issues— there were, of course, differences in their approaches and personalities.

Brownsberger, of Belmont, seemed rather a proper Bostonian, smart and well-spoken. He emphasized what he called his record of “doing what’s right when it’s difficult”—and that, in light of the current circus (my term) that is Congress...”we need adults in DC.”

Clark, of Melrose, seemed to be courting the women’s vote—with an emphasis on the importance of family and community.

Koutoujian, of Waltham, tall and quickwitted, said that as an Armenian whose ancestors experienced genocide, he identifies with the Jewish people and strongly supports civil rights, homeland security, justice, women's rights, the Affordable Care Act and an end to gun violence.

Long, with a technology background—described himself as an “agent of change, of new ideas” who believes in “truth in advertising” with regard to special interest groups. He also supports a return of War Powers to Congress, and a modest capital gains tax (approximately 2%) to help fund Social Security. (Between us—and his campaign manager—he spoke a bit too quickly to be easily understood).

Maisano, of Stoneham, who speaks with a strong Boston “brogue,” emphasized his business background. He was the only candidate to say he supports individuals’ rights to own guns, but agreed that strong background checks are needed before purchase.

Sciortina, the youngest of the group, of Somerville is well spoken; in addition to his support of the overall liberal agenda, he focused on his ties to the gay/lesbian/bisexual and transsexual communities and his opposition to the potential use of force in the Middle East.

Spilka, a former labor attorney who is now the state senate’s majority whip and very articulate, characterized herself as believing strongly in social and economic justice.

As mentioned, I was impressed with each of the candidates—and believe that any of them would do a good job of representing my views and those of the constituents of the broad-ranging Fifth Congressional district. (The district includes parts of ultra liberal Cambridge and 24 towns stretching from Winthrop and Revere on the Massachusetts Bay to the Metro West communities of Framingham and Ashland.

I never thought I’d say this—(and I’m not saying who has my

vote)—but with so many similarities in the candidates' platforms I'm going to vote based on personality and likeability. That is—I'll vote for the candidate I think has the best chance of convincing the bozos in DC find some common ground.

The special primary will be held on Tuesday Oct. 15.

Note to the candidates and their supporters—Please feel free to comment if you feel I've misstated views or emphases—the presentations were very quick and I was writing very fast.

—Anita M. Harris

Sunday, September 29, 2013

6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

 Temple Emunah, 9 Piper Road, Lexington