

Democrats compete for shot at 7th District House seat held by Schwarz

Ann Arbor News, The (MI) (Published as Ann Arbor News (MI)) - August 5, 2006

- Page: A2
- Readability: 10-12 grade level (Lexile: 1200)

ELECTION 2006

News Staff Reporter

Though much of the attention on Michigan's 7th Congressional District has focused on incumbent U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, and his heated GOP primary race with Tim Walberg, four Democrats have been arduously working for a spot on the November ballot.

The field includes Sharon Renier, who bested two opponents in the 2004 Democratic primary before losing to Schwarz in a traditionally Republican-leaning district.

Standing in her way of a repeat in Tuesday's primary are Washtenaw County residents Daryl Campbell, Chuck Ream and Fred Strack.

The 7th District covers 14 townships in northern and western Washtenaw County, as well as the cities of Saline and Chelsea, and the villages of Dexter and Manchester. Here are the candidates' views on some key issues.

Q: What is the right strategy for American troop involvement in Iraq?

Campbell: We're the world police right now and it's a bad business. We absolutely have to isolate the terrorists, the extreme fundamentalists, and go after them specifically. We can't go back in history and make changes to foreign policy decisions we've already made. What we have to do is start planning for the future and take care of our troops doing the fighting right now. We've got to bring them back when the time is right, and then be sure to take care of them.

Ream: We have to get out and have to get out quickly. You don't solve a mistake by doing more of the same thing. I'm unique in this race by advocating the option of a three-state solution. We should allow them to vote if they prefer it to be three nations based on ethnic divides. Setting up the boundaries would be a challenge, but the presence of our troops there is giving strength and duration to the insurgency.

Renier: We need to secure the Green Zone, which is not as secure as we think, so that the Iraqi people can begin to take control of their own government. We're seen as the aggressor and we need collaboration from troops of all the nations to help so that it will seem like a community or group effort. In addition, I'd like to see us rebuild the country that President Bush has demolished. And it has to be done without the Bin Laden family, or Halliburton or the Carlisle Group.

Strack: Splitting Iraq apart in essence gives the Shiite-dominated portion of Iraq, where Iran has a foothold, prominence and additional influence. I don't see that as a viable option, and more importantly, as a freshman legislator you won't be able to get that done.

Q: If elected, what would you propose doing to improve Michigan's economy?

Campbell: In the short term, we can draw jobs by improving education, and stop exporting our educators. We've got to repair, revamp and redo our K-12 education. School districts are closing schools, and when that happens, people move. We can't draw businesses here if we're exporting people.

We've also got to make the tax system simpler and fairer for small businesses.

Ream: We've got to ready ourselves to enter the information, technology and knowledge-based economies of the future, but I must say we're not on a level playing field with our manufacturing operations. The Chinese are artificially keeping the value of their currency low so that our products cost more and our workers lose their jobs.

If they refuse to let their currency float on the world market, we must institute tariffs equivalent to the discrepancy to protect our workers.

There's also a real crisis of personal transportation around the world and I'd propose a federal institute on personal transportation research and development. Let's get the best scientists in the world here in southern Michigan to try and figure out real solutions to personal transportation and energy use.

Renier: I'm working with Ford Motor engineers on an invention about to go on the market that could bring 2,500 jobs to this district and co-op jobs to community college students. I'm also working with the University of Michigan regents to establish a mentoring program between U-M students and those from Jackson or Washtenaw community colleges in this field.

We can take the rust out of the rust belt and make it a high-tech belt.

Strack: We first need to address the Chinese currency manipulation. I don't support tariffs but would enforce the trade agreements we currently have. I'd also fight to fund research in automotive innovations like fuel cells and hybrid automobiles, and get into the energy independence aspect of the economy that goes beyond ethanol research.

Q: How would you address congressional corruption?

Campbell: If a member of Congress is caught breaking the law, they should be done. No second or third chances. We don't need new regulations, we have enough, we just need to enforce them with teeth.

Lobbyists, when they contribute, are doing it for access, and there's no problem with that. The problem comes when legislators are getting deterred by whoever is giving money just because they're giving money and it becomes an auction. That's when corruption sets in.

Ream: We're supposed to have a democracy in America and it's turned into this kind of money-ocracy for lack of a better term. A lot of people don't participate in the political system because they know their vote is relatively meaningless.

I support campaign finance reforms proposed by James Carville, where the challenger raises as much money as wanted, then the incumbent would get that equivalent in public financing. More equality, and people would much more enjoy getting involved in the process and their participation would be much more meaningful.

Renier: If I need to take a trip, I'll pay for it. I'm very fiscally responsible and as far as campaign finance, I say give everybody \$10,000 and see what they do with it. Will they be lazy and fat or knock on a lot of doors so they can meet the public.

Strack: End lobbyist trips. Those relationships start you down a path where temptation gets you involved at a small level at first and then congressmen are just taking out-right bribes.

I support public financing of campaigns. The amount of money involved now just becomes overwhelming.

• *Record: 0416214621*

• *Copyright: Copyright, 2006, The Ann Arbor News. All Rights Reserved.*