

Congressional candidates spout canned platitudes at recent forum

HIGHLIGHTS

Respectful conversations with political opponents was a good experience

From a policy standpoint, candidates are largely indistinguishable from one another

Democrats don't really understand existing gun laws but want more



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BY MATTHEW HOY
Special to The Tribune

Last week, I attended the 24th Congressional District [candidates' forum](#) at Cuesta College. (Video of the event is available on the Charter Communications Local Edition [YouTube page](#).)

The two-hour event was largely predictable and probably a good example of why people are frustrated with politics and politicians. The forum's four Democrats, three Republicans and two independents' time was largely spent in spouting canned platitudes to their prospective bases.

I'm a Second Amendment proponent, so the answer to the yes/no question "Should Americans have the right to purchase a semi-automatic firearm?" interested me.

The question garnered a "no" from Santa Barbara Mayor [Helene Schneider](#).

Farmer [Bill Ostrander](#) also said "no" before reconsidering, saying: "Semi-automatic, yes. Assault weapon, no."

Santa Barbara County Supervisor [Salud Carbajal](#) responded that semi-automatic weapons were assault weapons and Americans shouldn't be able to buy them.

Democrat [Benjamin Lucas](#) answered "yes."

Over the past couple of days, I had the pleasure of speaking with Schneider and Ostrander on the phone. Carbajal responded to a series of written questions. I spoke with Lucas briefly after the forum itself.

It's an experience to delve into areas of disagreement with people who see politics in a fundamentally different way than you do in a respectful fashion.

I've long been of the opinion that Democrats can't be bothered to really learn about guns and gun laws.

My conversations did nothing to disabuse me of this impression.

When given the opportunity to revise and extend her remarks, Schneider said she didn't want to ban all semi-automatic weapons — which would include many handguns commonly used for self-defense, not to mention many types of rifles — but assault rifles.

Ostrander, a gun owner who uses them to hurt the feelings of squirrels, also told me his concern was assault rifles, not weapons that were good for hunting.

"An assault weapon represents the type of gun used to kill humans and not involved with hunting or sport," he said.

Carbajal, who served in the Marines, wrote he supports the Second Amendment; "however, there is nothing in the Second Amendment that precludes us from taking reasonable restrictions on the sale of military-grade weapons or restricting the capacity of extended ammunition clips."

Pressing the candidates further on the issue exposed what I've come to expect from far too many Democrats.

Schneider defined assault weapons as guns such as the AR-15 that are solely used for killing people. She was not aware that AR-pattern rifles are commonly used in [3-gun shooting](#) competitions.

Ostrander, when pressed, named AR- and AK-pattern rifles as "assault weapons" that civilians don't need to own since they aren't used for hunting.

When asked how he would define them, a necessary step a legislator writing laws would need to take, he demurred, instead complaining that Americans who own these rifles are "insecure."

Although Carbajal says he supports the Second Amendment, on his campaign site he says he wants to ban "high-capacity ammunition purchases."

This is nonsensical. As is the phrase "extended ammunition clips." The Marines used to know the difference between clips and magazines.

Lucas has perhaps the most Second Amendment-"friendly" gun control position.

Lucas would allow anyone who is legally allowed to own a gun to have the right to carry a concealed weapon after they've been fingerprinted and submitted a DNA sample.

Lucas says only "hardcore" Republicans have objected to the DNA provision (including myself), but I suspect many people in counties like Los Angeles, San Francisco and Santa Barbara would take him up on his offer in a microsecond.

It should come as no surprise that I won't be voting for any of them on June 7. To my eye — with the exception of Lucas — Schneider, Ostrander and Carbajal are indistinguishable on the issues.

Lucas referred to himself as a "Reagan Democrat" during the debate, and I think that's an accurate description. He might have luck running as a Democrat in West Virginia, but it's unlikely he'll make the general election here.

It's obvious that Ostrander's passion is his effort to accomplish something never before done not just in American history, but in human history: Get money out of politics.

I'd be surprised if Schneider or Carbajal — if elected — voted with Nancy Pelosi less than 99 percent of the time.

So, in the interest of serving the Democratic readers who have, until now, been shaking their heads as they read, here's what each said when asked how they were different from the others and why you should vote for them.

Ostrander: "I'm the most authentic of the three of us."

Schneider: "I am not only a strong vote on the issues. I'm a strong voice on the issues. I will speak out on core Democratic ballot issues and do so in the best interests of the voters of the 24th Congressional District."

Carbajal: "I pride myself on my strong record of working across party lines as a Santa Barbara County supervisor, bringing Democrats and Republicans together to solve problems and get results for the Central Coast. That's the kind of leadership we need in Congress today."

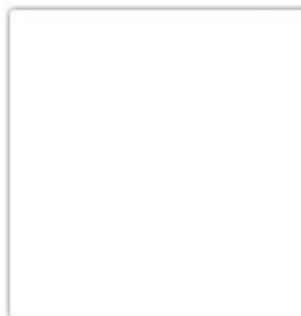
Lucas: "I feel the Democratic constituents as well as Republicans should vote for me, as I am the best possible candidate. I have signed no pledges to the DNC, nor have the backing of any groups, special interests or donors of any kind for the primary race."

I'll be posting more on my conversations with Schneider, Ostrander, Carbajal and Lucas — including one divisive area where we have some agreement — on my blog, [Hoystory.com](#), on Monday.

CONSERVATIVE COLUMNIST MATTHEW HOY IS A FORMER REPORTER, EDITOR AND PAGE DESIGNER. HIS COLUMN APPEARS IN THE TRIBUNE EVERY OTHER SUNDAY, IN ROTATION WITH LIBERAL COLUMNIST TOM FULKS. READ HOY'S BLOG AT [HOYSTORY.COM](#). FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER @[HOYSTORY](#).

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Uebersax for Congress 2016

Hey Matthew, even if you don't agree with any of my positions, don't you think it's only fair to mention that there was an antiwar anti-establishment candidate in the debate? Think what you like, my direct and harsh criticism of US wars hardly fits the pattern of "canned platitudes!"

And when was the last time you heard of an antiwar candidate who supports 2nd Amendment rights?

If you think I'm wrong then great -- explain your disagreement and we can have a productive dialogue here. But what's the point of having debate in a democracy if as huge a topic as war is simply ignored?

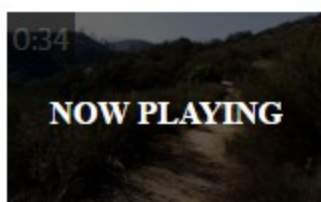
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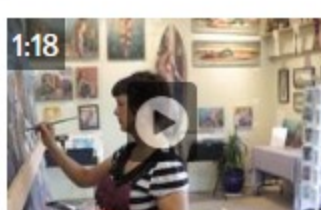
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ABOUT MATTHEW HOY



Matthew Hoy, a conservative, is a San Diego-area native and 1994 graduate of Cal Poly's journalism program. He spent 15 years at various newspapers along the West Coast, including The Lompoc Record, The Daily World in Aberdeen, Wash., The North County Times in Escondido and The San Diego Union-Tribune. For 15 years, Hoy has written a blog on politics and the media, [Hoystory.com](#). Hoy's column will be published in The Tribune every other week, in rotation with liberal columnist Tom Fulks.

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