

Three candidates vie for 10th SD Dem nomination

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The three Dem candidates facing off in the 10th SD primary later this month are bringing very different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives to the race.

Still, the trio agrees that Foxconn is a bad deal for the state, with each of them telling WisPolitics.com in separate interviews they'd look to change the state's contract with the Taiwanese tech company if elected to succeed Sen. Sheila Harsdorf, R-River Falls.

But on other issues — a 5 cent gas tax hike, and the carrying of concealed weapons without a permit — 57-year-old Patty Schachtner, a Somerset resident and St. Croix County medical examiner, sports a different position than her two primary opponents.

On the question of a gas tax hike, she's largely undecided, saying while she doesn't know if it's "the best option," she'd need to join others in looking "at all solutions and then come to a consensus."

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Meanwhile, opponents John Calabrese, 41, of Glenwood City and Reuben Herfindahl, 43, of River Falls, have a more definitive take.

"I don't think there's much more of a fair tax than a gas tax, because you pay as much as you use," said Herfindahl, who owns an IT services firm called Digital Brigade.

Schachtner's also non-committal on the GOP constitutional carry bill, saying while her husband has a concealed carry permit, it's important to weigh the rights of people who choose to carry guns with those who don't.

She added she brings a different perspective to the issue through her work as a medical examiner because, “I see the lethality of what guns do.”

Calabrese and Herfindahl both said they’d oppose the bill, although they added they aren’t against guns.

“I was raised shooting guns, and I’ve done some hunting,” said Calabrese, who’s self-employed running a woodworking business. “But I think that that’s just counterproductive and not safe. It just doesn’t make sense to me.”

The three also vary in their political backgrounds. Schachtner is currently serving in her first term as a member of the Somerset School Board and previously spent two terms as supervisor on the Star Prairie Town Board.

Schachtner said both of those experiences have helped her “understand the importance of local control,” adding that she’s “adamant about preserving the rights of local governments to make decisions” even as she seeks the Senate seat.

She also says she’s passionate about improving access to mental health care and addiction treatment in the 10th SD, saying her work experience also allows her to bring “a perspective that’s different” to the race.

Calabrese, meanwhile, is a five-year volunteer with Wolf-PAC Wisconsin, a group seeking to get money out of politics. Through his role there as state director, he’s put pressure on the Legislature to pass a resolution aimed at calling for a national convention to add a Free and Fair Elections Amendment to the U.S. constitution.

The resolution — SJR 24 and AJR 25 — was referred to Senate and Assembly committees in spring. No action has been taken on it since.

Still, Calabrese said he’s looking to tie money in politics to every issue to explain to people that those who have the ear of legislators — because of the donations they give — get a lot of money funneled to them through tax breaks cuts and subsidies. That money, he said, then has to be made up for somewhere in the budget.

He also said he’s capping individual donations to his campaign at \$200, with a \$1,000 overall limit.

Calabrese, who was raised as a Republican, said he considered running for the seat as an independent. But because the election was “such a quick turnaround” and in

order to get the 400 needed signatures, he opted to run as a Dem.

Herfindahl has never run for office before or been formally involved in politics. But he said there's a need to run for election now, because the district hasn't been well represented in areas "where big politics and ambitions get in the way of taking care of the little guy," specifically in the selling off of public lands in recent years.

Herfindahl added changes also have to be made in education, including the repeal of Act 10. That's because taking away teachers' ability to collectively bargain had delivered a blow to their ability to support themselves through tough times, he said.

He called Gov. Scott Walker's budget, which pumped \$636 million into K-12 and gave an over \$100 million boost to the UW System, a "step in the right direction." But he said teachers need more support, including paying them a "fair, living wage."

The winner of the Dec. 19 primary will go on to face both the GOP primary winner and Libertarian Brian J. Corriea of Wilson on Jan. 16.

Hear the audio from the interviews:

*Schachtner: https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/171208_schachtner/s-GIFrr

*Calabrese: https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/160213_002a/s-UduGd

*Herfindahl: https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/160213_001a/s-wjsFz