

Church, Tiffany clash over prevailing wage law in first debate

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GOP 7th CD candidates state Sen. Tom Tiffany and former Army Ranger Jason Church battled in Thursday night's debate over prevailing wage requirements for federal construction work and who will be the most loyal to President Trump if elected.

Tiffany touted his support for repealing the Davis-Bacon Act, a 1931 federal law requiring the government to pay local prevailing wages and fringe benefits for construction work, as one way to help curb the national debt. The Minocqua Republican said he "saved the state millions" by supporting repeal of a similar Wisconsin law during his tenure as a legislator.

Tiffany said he was the only one on stage in favor of repealing the law, which he said is an example of unnecessary bureaucracy. And he knocked his opponent for not being "with us on draining the swamp."

But Church portrayed Tiffany's position on the law as "taking his orders from Milwaukee and Madison" and pointed out that Trump and former U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy, R-Wausau, both favor keeping the law.

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"If you wanna say you're with President Trump, put your money where your mouth is," Church said.

Church said prevailing wages are important for northern Wisconsin workers and that he would stick with the president in supporting rural America.

Church said he admired the president for his willingness to "throw a couple grenades in the swamp." The former aide to U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson said he is the

only candidate in the race who has supported Trump “from day one” and that he would “fight every single day” alongside the president.

Tiffany often cited his support of the president, saying “the wall should be built” and that he wouldn’t have voted for a resolution criticizing the president’s troop pullout from northern Syria. He also pointed to his record as a state lawmaker and that he is the only one in the race who has voted to pass conservative priorities.

The debate was sponsored by No Better Friend, a conservative group founded by former GOP U.S. Senate candidate Kevin Nicholson. It was the first meeting of the two GOP candidates ahead of the Feb. 18 primary. On the Dem side, Michigan businessman Lawrence Dale and Ho-Chunk Nation Supreme Court Justice Tricia Zunker are vying for their party’s nomination. The winners will advance to the May 12 special election to replace Duffy, who resigned Sept. 28.

A panel peppered the two GOP candidates with questions on K-12 education, the national debt, national security, foreign policy and their anti-abortion priorities.

Church backed a constitutional amendment banning abortion and called any kind of policy in favor of abortion “the subsidized killing of our children.”

Tiffany said Roe v. Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court rule legalizing abortion nationally, should be overturned so the issue can be decided at the state level.

“I have a deeply held belief in preserving life,” Tiffany said. “It stems from my three daughters. I was there in the delivery room. You never forget it.”