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EDITORIAL: Campaign 2010: The idea race that no one is winning

Tuesday, Oct. 19 | 0 comments

We are now less than two weeks away from Nov. 3, Election Day, when voters across the 10th Congressional District will cast ballots for someone to represent us in the U.S. House of Representatives.

On the ballot will be Republican incumbent Frank Wolf, Democratic challenger Jeff Barnett and Libertarian William Redpath. The Times-Mirror has interviewed all three candidates, and we'll present our endorsement in the Oct. 27 edition of this newspaper.

While the quest for the 10th District seat has not been a marquee race for these midterm national elections, it is nonetheless important to us here in Loudoun. This race takes on additional importance for two reasons. First, it features a 30-year incumbent with seniority – Wolf. Second, we are one of only a dozen Congressional districts that surround our nation's capital, the policy-making epicenter of the United States. Many who work in Congress or the federal government reside within Loudoun's borders. Both of these points elevate the status of the 10th District.

To be blunt, we are underwhelmed by the race to date. While the three major debates in each county of the 10th are in full-swing, we are nonetheless struck by the lack of energy and enthusiasm that has become a hallmark of this race.

We miss good ole' fashioned rallies. We miss the town halls burgeoning with supporters (and non-supporters) clamoring for a glimpse of the candidate with the hope of hearing his ideas. We miss the door-to-door canvassing upon which basic campaigns have been waged in years past (if this is taking place, we're totally unaware of it.) Perhaps the frenetic pace of 2008 spoiled us.

And, where are the candidate-to-candidate challenges on records, votes and positions? If daily press releases are being issued, someone has our e-mail address wrong. Either that, or we need to check our spam folder.

Most of all, we're forlorn by the dearth of ideas that has tainted this race thus far. Wolf has mostly relied heavily on a campaign of "what he's done" rather than "what he'll do" if re-elected. It's been a look backward, rather than a quest for a forward-looking vision.

From Barnett, what we've heard to date amounts to little more than a set of staple Democrat talking points that lacks policy effervescence and "outside-the-box" thinking.

As for Redpath, while we find many of his ideas thought- provoking (if quixotic), they seem to emanate from the CATO Institute think tank, rather than his own original policy playbook.

We deserve better. We want to see a forward-looking agenda. We want a vision outlined. We hunger for the candidates' "five-point" (heck, why not 10-point?) plans for action if elected. While they've laid out general themes on core issues in speeches and campaign websites, these all appear stale and sterile.

We want to see agendas that are provoking and provocative, not protective or suffocatingly partisan. But, more than anything, we want specifics – and some form of policy-based, intellectual prowess that gives us a legislative road map to their term in office.

It's a shame that candidates are settling into the comfortable, plush ideological chasms of the left and right. Once again, it appears that the sensible center is the lonely, ostracized stepchild of politics in America in 2010.

We expected more, and we're getting a whole lot less. Democracy, and the people of the 10th District, suffer as a result.



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So, gentlemen candidates, start your idea engines. You still have two weeks left. Make each day count.

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