



Greenlight debate gets more intense

By [Mitch Perry](#)

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I'm not sure there were many undecided voters in the St Pete Community Church in Disston Heights last night. They were gathered to watch a forum on Greenlight Pinellas, the transit tax swap that Pinellas County voters will vote on in 55 days (or sooner with early voting).

Randall O'Toole from the Cato Institute (which he admitted gets some funding from Charles Koch of Koch Brothers fame) debated former St. Pete City Councilman and now Yes on Greenlight spokesman Jeff Danner in an hour-long forum, with yours truly serving as a moderator.

I thought it was a thoughtful and informative discussion. O'Toole is rather doctrinaire in his attitude toward light rail, and even though he was a spokesman for the anti-Greenlight side, his viewpoint doesn't always jibe entirely with the main opposition group, No Tax For Tracks.

That group strongly rejects the accusation that they favor privatizing PSTA; at least they did when Connect Tampa Bay accused them of that. But O'Toole does believe in privatization, and has written at least one paper advocating for it.

If nothing else, hopefully the partisans in the audience learned a little more about the issue. I say that because, having covered so many campaign forums this year, it's hard to find people who attend these events with an open mind. That's not a criticism — these are some extremely well-informed people. As such they have strong opinions, and in the case of Greenlight, the key for both camps is to find those uninformed or undecided voters and advocate for their side.

In other news...

In a move to grab female voters, the Charlie Crist camp went after Rick Scott on [abortion rights yesterday](#).

Mayor Bob Buckhorn unveiled the plan to redevelop [Riverfront Park](#) yesterday — a big but largely ignored park on the west side of the Hillsborough River.

And Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter [Sonia Nazario](#) comes to speak at Eckerd College in St.

Petersburg tomorrow night. Her book, *Enrique's Journey*, documents the trip to the U.S. of an 11-year-old boy from Honduras in search of his mother.