

# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

## GOP hopefuls sharpen their arguments

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen  
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 04/27/2010 01:14:58 PM PDT

Updated: 04/27/2010 11:18:09 PM PDT

BRENTWOOD — Four Republicans competing in the Congressional District 11 primary have nearly indistinguishable stances on the issues, but in a head-to-head debate Monday night, each argued forcefully in favor of their respective experiences and temperaments.

Retired U.S. Marshal Tony Amador, of Lodi, stressed his nearly four-decade career in local, state and federal government service.

Disabled children's advocate Elizabeth Emken, of Danville, spoke about how her autistic son spurred her decision to leave her job at IBM as an efficiency expert and lobby Congress for improvements in research and treatment of serious childhood diseases.

Grapegrower Brad Goehring, of Clements, played to his strengths as a fourth-generation San Joaquin Valley farmer and businessman who has become a national spokesman on behalf of agricultural interests.

Attorney David Harmer, of Dougherty Valley, emphasized his policy work with conservative think tanks such as the Pacific Legal and Heritage foundations and the Cato Institute.

Sponsored by the East Contra Costa Republican Women and the East Contra Costa TEA Party Patriots, the two-hour forum put the candidates through an impressive, fast-paced test on their knowledge of the issues.

The primary victor will run against incumbent Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, in the general election.

The sprawling 11th District stretches from the San Ramon Valley south to Morgan Hill, over the Altamont Pass into the western portion of San Joaquin County and far eastern Contra Costa County.

The GOP candidates echoed each other on most key conservative stances, such as reduced government, fewer regulations, lower taxes and tighter illegal immigration enforcement.

All pledged to work to repeal health care reform legislation and all supported the idea of requiring voters to produce identification at the polls.

Only Emken said she would not support a U.S. withdrawal from the United Nations but instead called for reforms.

The candidates were polite, but they are beginning to sharpen their edges as Election Day draws closer.

Amador aimed some of his most pointed statements at Emken and Harmer for what he calls their hypocrisy on health care.

Harmer has been endorsed by presidential candidate and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who signed state legislation similar to that of the national plan. Emken lobbied successfully for an amendment in the national health care bill that

Advertisement

**Kodak**

IF YOU'RE NOT PRINTING ON A KODAK ESP ALL-IN-ONE PRINTER, CHANCES ARE  
**YOU'RE PAYING TOO MUCH FOR INK.**

FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU'RE OVERPAYING FOR INK AT [PRINTANDPROSPER.COM](http://PRINTANDPROSPER.COM)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

bans insurance discrimination against autism treatment coverage.

"Would you really repeal it or are you just saying it?" Amador asked.

Harmer fired back, saying disagreements on specific issues, even among people who otherwise agree, is normal and said he disagrees with Romney on health care.

Emken reiterated her opposition and said she would have voted against the legislation.

She did not address the amendment in the forum but said during a recent interview that no one should interpret her support for an end to discriminatory coverage of autism treatments an endorsement for the sweeping health insurance reforms enacted by Congress.

Goehring went after his opponents on the source of their money and ballot titles.

As the owner of a business — his company grows grapes, installs vineyards and orchards, and provides contract farm labor — he says he is the only one qualified to call himself a "businessman." Harmer and Emken both used the word "business" in their ballot titles.

The title of "business executive/mother" was not Emken's first choice, she responded. Election officials rejected her preference of "special needs mom," a title she described as one that most accurately reflects her talents.

Goehring also pointed out that he has received the highest percentage of campaign contributions from people who live in the 11th District. Emken, Harmer

and Amador have ties to other states and Washington, D.C., where they have received money.

As an individual who has lived in several states and worked at the federal, state and local level, Amador said it is not unusual that he has collected outside contributions.

**Lisa Vorderbrueggen covers politics. Contact her at 925-945-4773 or [www.ibabuzz.com/politics](http://www.ibabuzz.com/politics) .**

Advertisement



  
**Florida Tech**  
 UNIVERSITY ONLINE

**Bring the Classroom to Your Home  
 With a Degree Online From Florida Tech**

 **APPLY TODAY!**  
[FloridaTechOnline.com/FD](http://FloridaTechOnline.com/FD) | 1-888-253-5946

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™