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Former state Rep. Chris Herrod declares candidacy for Congress

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Former state Rep. Chris Herrod announced plans Tuesday to elbow his way into the burgeoning race to fill Rep. Jason Chaffetz's seat.

During a seven-minute interview on KNRS' Rod Arquette Show, Herrod responded to two questions about his decision to run: His answers jumped from equivocating on Russia to denouncing Islam to criticizing U.S. Sen. John McCain.

"As you know," he explained at one point, "I'm not shy about giving my opinion, especially against political correctness."

Now a real-estate agent in Provo, Herrod served for five years as a Republican in Utah's House of Representatives, where he made his mark as one of the most outspoken critics of illegal immigration. He brought up the topic Tuesday, saying it sometimes felt like he was "the only person that would talk about" it.

"Nobody has represented the voices of the legal immigrants or the working class that are getting crushed by illegal immigration," he said. "I've done that in the past."

Herrod said there should be "a perfectly clear expectation" for refugees coming into the United States from Muslim-majority countries. President Donald Trump attempted to initiate a new refugee policy with a series of bans, though the executive orders were ultimately blocked by the courts.

"When 25 percent of terrorists are actually from the refugee community," Herrod said, "that lets you know that something's not up to snuff with our vetting process."

No individual entering the United States as a refugee has been connected to a fatal terrorist attack for at least the past three decades, according to an analysis by the Cato Institute, a conservative Washington think tank.

Herrod bills himself as an "unconventional conservative," though his platforms of states' rights and limited executive power mirror traditional GOP policies, particularly in Utah. In his radio interview, he mentioned Bears Ears National Monument as an example of federal overreach.

His campaign website, herrodforcongress.com, remained relatively bare Tuesday evening, with just his declaration of candidacy for "the great state of Utah" and his contact information.

In past years, Herrod has launched — and lost — subsequent bids to unseat U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch and, later, state Sen. Curt Bramble, R-Provo.

In his push for Chaffetz's seat, which the congressman will vacate June 30, Herrod faces at least four other Republicans who have already filed in the expedited special election timeline: state

Sens. Deidre Henderson and Margaret Dayton, state Rep. Brad Daw and investment adviser Tanner Ainge (son of Boston Celtics General Manager Danny Ainge). Two Democrats have also submitted their paperwork: progressive candidate Ben Frank and activist Carl Ingwell.

Democrat Kathryn Allen and Republican Damian Kidd have announced their intentions to run. Provo Mayor John Curtis, who is expected to announce his decision Thursday evening, has continued to weigh jumping into the race.

Herrod said Tuesday that he's fit to represent the 3rd Congressional District, which stretches from Salt Lake County to San Juan County, because of his "willingness to speak on the difficult issues."