

CAMPAIGN 2008

King, Farry set date for their first debate

If dates, locations and other details can be arranged, the two state representative candidates will debate four times, including one on reforming state government.

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One debate is set, and state representative candidates Chris King and Frank Farry said they are willing to debate three more times if sites and other details can be arranged.

The incumbent, King, D-142, and Republican challenger Farry are set to debate Sept. 11 at the Pennswood Village Retirement Community in Middletown. The possibility of other debates arose after Farry issued a press release accusing King of being all talk and no action on Harrisburg reform, and King fired back that Farry didn't know what he was talking about.

In the Farry press release, he and campaign manager John Coffman called King a roadblock to reform. Farry and Coffman said King was named to the organization Pennsylvania Clean Sweep's Hall of Shame for refusing to sign a petition to force a special session of the Legislature to deal with reform issues.

"As I knock on doors throughout the 142nd District, one of the issues that I hear about constantly is the need to reform Harrisburg," said Farry. "I believe that we need representatives who are committed to reforming Harrisburg in order to put government back to work for us."

In response, King said he recently made a special trip to Harrisburg to sign the petition and had planned to do so before Farry's public criticism. King's campaign produced an e-mail from PACleanSweep's Russ Diamond thanking King for the special trip to sign.

King then challenged Farry to a debate specifically on reforming state government and the Legislature. Farry said he would be happy to debate on that issue and suggested four debates, counting the one already scheduled at Pennswood. King's campaign said it was willing.

"If Frank Farry and his campaign want to talk about my role as a reformer in Harrisburg, I want to give the citizens of this district an opportunity to hear us discuss our differences," said King. "I was the first legislator to testify before the speaker's reform commission, with 13 of my proposals being adopted. I have introduced legislation to study the pay and benefits of members and have called for a citizens constitutional convention. I have tried to lead on this issue, but if Frank has any ideas other than the ones I have pushed for already, I'd be interested in hearing them."

Farry also has criticized King for not making strong public statements on Bill DeWeese, D-Greene, the House majority leader. He has been criticized by many for fostering an atmosphere that led to the recent indictment of 12 people, including former House Democratic whip Mike Veon, on charges of siphoning millions of dollars of taxpayer funds into political campaigns.

King said he has urged DeWeese to resign from his leadership positions in private conversations where King also indicated he would not be supporting DeWeese for those positions in the future.

"Chris has made his position clear," said King campaign manager John Murphy. "He has no interest in being a political grandstander by issuing a press release simply to grab headlines, as his opponent seems apt to do."

Responded Farry: "The people of this district deserve to know where Chris King stands. He should make the public aware of where he stands on these types of issues."

Farry also wondered why King took so long to sign the CleanSweep reform petition that's been out for several weeks.

"Once again, Chris King has hooked his car to the end of the train instead of leading the charge," said Farry.

King said he has and will continue to work for reform in Harrisburg.

The Pennswood Village debate will be at 7 p.m. on Sept. 11 in Penn Hall at Pennswood, which is located at 1382 Langhorne-Newtown Road [Route 413] in Middletown. It's open only to Pennswood residents and some people from the nearby Newtown Friends and George Schools, said Pennswood Administrative Coordinator Sally Marrington.

Debates at Pennswood are usually open to the general public, but construction at the complex has limited parking and room capacity, she said.

King represents Langhorne, Langhorne Manor, Penndel, Hulmeville, most of Middletown and most of Lower Southampton.

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