

142ND DISTRICT

Candidates agreeable in debate

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With nearly 2.6 million senior citizens in Pennsylvania, there was quite a bit of interest in Thursday's debate between Democratic state Rep. Chris King and his Republican challenger, Frank Farry.

The two candidates vying for the 142nd District seat spent nearly 90 minutes answering questions from seniors at the Middletown Senior Center on Trenton Road.

Both are young, both grew up in Middletown and both have parents who are either retired or nearing retirement age. And the two agreed on many of the issues.

Property tax concerns raised the most questions.

Both agree that property tax reform is paramount, they told the crowd. Both also believe that health care reform is essential. And both agree that bringing new businesses to Bucks County is necessary to continue economic growth.

They disagree somewhat on how to accomplish those goals.

King said he has proven himself on health care by authoring and getting passed legislation that keeps low income seniors in the PACE/PACENET program. King also fought for an amendment to the open records bill, which takes effect Jan. 1. This will put the responsibility on government to explain why documents are not available to the public.

King said reforms are needed to change the way health care providers, such as Blue Cross, do business, and he doesn't endorse privatization of health care.

Farry is against universal health care, calling it "a one size fits all" plan. But he said he wants maximum health care services for seniors and has several plans to accomplish that. He didn't elaborate.

They were asked if they endorse storing seniors' medical records electronically for all to see. Both said they are against any such recordkeeping.

Both candidates said they strongly support the property tax rebates available for seniors that, in some cases, eliminate the tax.

But Farry said the Neshaminy School District, which is in the 142nd District, does not receive its fair share of funding and, in fact, is in the bottom 20 percentile in receiving state funding yet near the top of using local funding, mostly taxes. He proposes freezing school taxes for seniors.

"While the property tax rebate is a great idea funded by the casino slots, it was a total waste using some of that money to fund a new hockey arena, which could have been used for tax relief," said Farry, who referred to the new home of the Pittsburgh Penguins of the National Hockey League, which is estimated to cost about \$290 million.

Earlier Thursday, Gov. Ed Rendell said the money was spent to keep the franchise from relocating.

And both King and Farry told questioners that green and renewable energy is necessary.

King favors wind turbine technology, which is at the Keystone Industrial Port Complex, the former USS Fairless Works, in Falls. Other green energy businesses are at the complex and some are being built. Farry added that redevelopment of abandoned buildings, such as the former Giant store on New Falls Road in Middletown, needs to be addressed.

King's district includes Hulmeville, Langhorne, Langhorne Manor, Penndel, all but two precincts in Lower Southampton and most of

Middletown.

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