

Dayton Daily News | Complete In-Depth News Service

Sunday, February 26, 2012 | 67

Local & state

Six Democrats running in new 10th District

Four have run for Congress in recent years.

By Jeremy P. Kelley
Staff Writer

Democratic voters have six candidates to choose from in the 10th congressional primary March 6, ranging in age from 28 to 67 and with a cross-section of the community from business owner to retired teacher, and from pizza delivery driver to attorney.

Four have run for Congress in recent years. None has held elected office.

David Esrati

Esrati, 49, lives in Dayton and runs an advertising agency. He helped revitalize the historic South Park area, where he lives.

He has run for Dayton City Commission multiple times, and ran in the 2008 and 2010 Democratic primaries for Congress.

He suggested three main reasons for America's financial struggles — military spending on unnecessary weapons, wars and overseas bases; financial industry deregulation that led to a "casino" setup on Wall Street; and higher health care spending.

Esrati pushed for an end to "corporate welfare," and suggested that CEO pay be capped at 35 times average worker pay for government contractors and called for stronger penalties against corporate criminals.

He wants troops out of Afghanistan and the military focused more on spe-



David Esrati, Olivia Freeman, Tom McMasters, Sharen Neuhardt, Mack Van Allen and Ryan Steele (not pictured) are running in the 10th District.

cial forces roles.

He wants simpler rules and regulations for small business, and tougher rules for those on public assistance. He said if elected he hopes to post to the Internet a daily report of what happened in Washington.

"I've had a business for 22 years," Esrati said. "I hate to tell you, but if you can't work with people, you wouldn't have a business for 22 years."

Olivia Freeman

Freeman, 60, lives in Fairborn and is a consultant to small business.

She ran unsuccessfully in the 2010 Congressional primary for the 7th district.

Freeman spoke repeatedly about the need to re-emerge American manufacturing, describing it as an answer to job woes as well as deficit problems.

She said the lack of credit available to small businesses is a hurdle to accomplishing this goal and said if the government can find money for corporate bailouts, it "blows well better find money for this."

Freeman also called for the use of "simulation technology" in education to better prepare students in science curriculums.

She wants U.S. troops out of Afghanistan and said

she does not believe in cutting entitlement programs, saying once the baby boomers wave is past, the programs will be sound again. She said her business experience has prepared her for a bipartisan approach.

"When I am working with companies, I've got to work on both sides of the fence, making sure both the city and the contractor are getting their needs met," Freeman said. "And I am a tough negotiator."

Tom McMasters

McMasters, 49, lives in Huber Heights, and is a retired Air Force officer working as a support contractor at Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

He ran for Huber Heights City Council and challenged John Boehner in a 2010 Republican Congressional primary.

McMasters offers complex policy answers, saying on his web site that his "strengths are the willingness to do a lot of technical work, the ability to comprehend the details and sensitivity to promote credible solutions."

He said he sees the federal debt as a major hindrance to the economy. He said policymakers pushing to raise interest rates need to weigh whether raising

taxes would have the same effect. He said lawmakers calling for trillions of dollars in deficit reduction should realize that

the Bush tax cuts were the equivalent of a \$4 trillion expenditure.

Asked about abortion and gay marriage positions, McMasters said, "If you're hard on one side, you're probably not going to vote for me."

He leaned toward "civil unions" for gay couples, and said from a religious standpoint, abortion makes him "uncomfortable" but he wouldn't support legislation against it.

Sharen Neuhardt

Neuhardt, 60, lives near Yellow Springs and practices business law for the firm Thompson Hine.

In 2008, she lost the 7th U.S. House District race to Steve Austin. She is endorsed by the Montgomery County Democratic Party.

Neuhardt said government can help the economy by avoiding its recent near-shutdowns over the debt ceiling and tax decisions.

She said her career as a business lawyer would help her create compromise in Washington, as she has brokered deals between companies where "neither side gets 100 percent of what they want."

Neuhardt said America needs more tax revenue, and it needs to come

from the wealthy. Neuhardt said giving the president a line-item veto on budget items would help reduce the nation's debt because spending bills come before Congress, with a multitude of provisions that wouldn't pass if considered on their own.

"We have to ... make sure the Air Force base is strong and flourishing," Neuhardt said. "But not everybody can work at the base. We have to do a good job of reaching out to businesses that are already located in the Miami Valley and asking them to invest more."

Ryan Steele

Steele, 28, lives in Beavercreek and works as a pizza delivery driver. He said Friday that his Wright State course work in religious studies and philosophy is finished, but he will not receive the degree until outstanding fees are paid.

Steele is new to politics and claims that as a strength, arguing that Americans have sent lawyers and CEOs to Congress and gotten little in return. "They're not 28, a pizza delivery guy and a philosopher ... that's a combination we haven't tried yet."

Steele said it is mostly the market's job to take care of the economy, with the government there to referee and regulate, except in extreme situations like the recent recession.

He said entitlement programs should not be dismantled, but also should do a better job of eliminating abuse.

As a former Libertarian, Steele said he has "an

innate hatred of the income tax" and is tired of politicians arguing over who raised or lowered taxes on which groups. He said the Fair Tax, or a similar governmental sales tax, is the best idea he's heard, as long as it doesn't disproportionately affect lower-income people.

Steele said his study of philosophy enables him to see both sides of an argument, so he said he can work in a bipartisan way.

Mack Van Allen

Van Allen, 67, lives in Centerville and is a retired high school government teacher.

This is his first run for office.

Van Allen says his primary concern is the federal debt. He cited an early November letter sent by 100 congressmen, urging the debt committee to pursue a \$4 trillion debt cut. "If Mitt Romney had been one of those 100, I wouldn't be in this race," he said.

Van Allen said long-term fixes can be made to programs like Social Security and Medicare that would prevent the United States from having a Greece-like collapse in 10 or 15 years.

He agrees with Neuhardt that long-term fiscal planning, rather than repeated six-month stopgap measures, would help businesses and the entire economy.

He says he's against cap markets, is against the payroll tax cut because it undermines social security funding, and believes quick U.S. military responses to some international conflicts are appropriate.