



Round Rock Leader



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District 52 hopefuls face off in forum

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With two months to go until the Nov. 4 general election, the Hutto Economic Development Corporation got an early jump on the candidate forum season by hosting District 52 state Rep. hopefuls Bryan Daniel and Diana Maldonado on Thursday.

The candidates - each seeking to succeed the retiring Mike Krusee - covered ground without much disagreement during the breakfast forum at Hutto's new Holiday Inn Express.

Both Republican candidate Daniel and Democratic standard-bearer Maldonado emphasized their experience and commitment to public service.

"Like many of you, I moved here for affordable housing and good schools," Maldonado told the crowd of about 70 people.

The Eagle Pass native and former Round Rock ISD school board president stressed her background in education, as well as 20 years working in the Texas State Comptroller's office.

"You put your best foot forward and give back to the community," said Maldonado, who described herself as a single mother with two college-age children.

Likewise - in this year of running against the political establishment - Daniel said he understands the needs of regular citizens because he is one himself.

A San Benito native, Daniel previously worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as state director for Rural Development in Texas. He is currently vice president of business and development (and also serves on the board of directors) for Agricultural Workers Mutual Auto Insurance.

Daniel, his wife and their two grade-school age daughters live in Georgetown, where he said the family is active in softball, soccer and 4-H.

"A very typical Williamson County family," Daniel said. "We moved here because of the opportunities for our family."

Forum questions - posed by Community Impact publisher John Garrett - ranged from education and transportation to electric transmission lines and taxes.

Few disagreements

The only major area of disagreement surfaced regarding a proposal that would require Texas voters to produce photo IDs when they go to the polls.

Daniel favors the idea. Maldonado opposes it.

"I think our vote is a precious right that we have and we should protect it at all turns," Daniel said, while agreeing with Maldonado that there is very little voter fraud to start with.

"I think it is going to disenfranchise senior citizens," Maldonado said. "I do not support voter IDs."

"Illegal aliens?" she added. "It is, as Bryan said, a small part of the issue. "You [the undocumented immigrant] are trying not to get caught. What makes you think an illegal alien is going to the polls to vote?"

Neither candidate supports giving parents vouchers for their children to attend private schools.

Specifically, Maldonado and Daniel each said they do not favor anything that diverts money away from public schools.

Maldonado said school accountability is an issue, with a mish-mash of state and federal testing standards muddying the waters.

"They're not talking to each other," she noted."

"Accountability seems to be the key [and] there's got to be a better way to do it," Daniel said. "That much stress [on students, parents and teachers] can't lead to accountability. I'm not sure we're doing what it's intended to do - that is, to have better schools and better students."

Both candidates said they will fight for Hutto residents in their efforts to keep LCRA power lines from being run through populated areas and near schools.

"I don't care if it's one poll or 1,000 polls or how aesthetically pleasing they are - they have no business moving through the middle of Hutto," Maldonado said.

"These lines run right by three schools," Daniel said of the LCRA plan. "You should not even be able to see this magnitude of a power line from a school playground.

Daniel went on to urge concerned Hutto residents to attend a Public Utilities Commission hearing in Austin, scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 11 at 9:30 a.m.

"We have to drive home that we know what we are talking about, because we do - and are paying attention, because we are," Daniel said.