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GENERAL SESSION

September 26, 2012

Program: State Candidates for Elective Office

Presented by: State Issues Committee

Chair: Kari Malkovich (for Suzanne Merrill)

Speakers: Lt. Governor

Vince Rampton (D)

Greg Bell (R)

Attorney General

John Swallow (R)

Dee Smith (D)

Utah House of Representatives District 60

Emmanuel Kepas (D)

Dana Layton (R)

Utah Senate District 8

Josie Valdez (D)

Brian Shiozawa (R)

Salt Lake County Mayor

Ben McAdams (D) – (represented by Julie McAdams)

Mark Crockett (R)

Vince Rampton (D) introduced himself as a trial lawyer who is proud to run on the ticket with Peter Cooke. He said Mr. Cooke is a pragmatist who will focus on policy engineering rather than operating as an ideologue. He called on the Utah legislature to follow this example and work for the good of the state in a more bi-partisan manner.

A Cooke/Rampton ticket would also focus on “building Utah from inside, rather than bringing big business from outside the state.” We would

do better, Mr. Rampton argued, to support our small businesses here. Educational policy can impact this goal by strengthening trade schools. He cited the 1997 Utah Constitutional Amendment that permitted the property tax allocation to education to include higher education, as well as K-12. He said Peter Cooke would re-visit all revenue streams to education.

Responding to questions, Mr. Rampton said the Wasatch Front’s air quality hovers around 47% during certain times of the year. Clean energy

should be more seriously explored to address our air quality issues. He thinks “ObamaCare” will probably be reformed to some degree, no matter how the general election turns out. Utah will doubtless be unable to do much about Medicaid expansion. An ombudsman could provide a helpful interface between government and non-profits.

Greg Bell (R) said although people respond to simplicity, voters should inform themselves well beyond the TV political ads and study the issues. We have a stark choice this election between two philosophies. Some states will choose larger government expenditures; some will choose more tightly reigned spending. Gov. Herbert’s philosophy is to approach many societal issues from the platform of a vibrant economy. For example, better-educated people generally obtain jobs that offer better health care.

The state doesn’t levy property taxes; counties – specifically the school boards, assess them. Lower taxes tend to stimulate job growth, he said. Businesses are continuing to gravitate to Utah because they are attracted to its business-friendly environment.

Responding to questions, Mr. Bell said natural gas is coming to the forefront. Utah volunteers at twice the rate as the next highest state (Nebraska). He also believes non-profits should be supported and recognized for their contributions to our state. Without specifying, he said there are “some exciting initiatives on the horizon regarding education.”

John Swallow (R) said prior to serving as Chief Deputy Attorney General, he worked in private practice and was elected to the state House of Representatives where he sponsored legislation to improve law enforcement. For this work he received an award from the Utah Association of Chiefs of Police.

Mr. Swallow wants to accomplish three things if elected attorney general. First, better educate our children on protecting themselves from Internet dangers. He supports the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) strike force. Second, protect family rights and the individual right to keep and bear arms. Third, protect education funding. To that end, Mr. Swallow

supports Gov. Herbert’s plan to regain control of our public lands.

Responding to questions, Mr. Swallow defended the suit against the Affordable Healthcare Act (AHCA) as defending the Commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution, and objected to characterizing it a message bill. On immigration, Mr. Swallow said the AG’s office would not seek to deport those brought over as children. The AG can’t do much about illegal immigrants who don’t pay taxes; therefore siphoning money from our school children. He is only empowered to enforce constitutional laws passed by the state legislature.

Dee Smith (D) is currently the Weber County Attorney. His wife has been a special education teacher for 22 years. They have four children in all three levels of public school. Mr. Smith served as a law clerk at the Weber County Attorney’s office. He has also worked for a private firm. In 2010 he was elected County Attorney. During that time he created a mental health court, assisting the mentally ill with housing, treatment and medications. As with drug abusers, Mr. Smith believes the mentally ill are too often housed in our jails. Mr. Smith has been named Prosecutor of the Year for several organizations.

Mr. Smith opposes HB148 Transfer of Public Lands, which requires the federal government to transfer all federally owned government lands to the state of Utah. He believes it is unconstitutional, likely to fail, and a waste of state funds.

Human trafficking in Utah is a concern. This area is largely under federal jurisdiction, which is frustrating to state law enforcement. Mr. Smith also favors a statewide database to identify gang members. The gang injunction so effective in Ogden should be expanded across the state. Responding to questions, Mr. Smith stated that a change in administration is needed to freshen and re-evaluate current policies and priorities.

Emmanuel Kepas (D) is a high school teacher and sports coach. He wants to represent individual citizens rather than special interest groups. The student body of his school is

composed of widely divergent communities. He supports Common Core and sees it as a needed framework, rather than an overreach of government. The state will create its own lessons from within this framework.

Legislation ought to be transparent and transparent, Mr. Kepas said. He believes Utah could do better with its legislative ethical standards. He also charged that the Governor's office with giving public funds to eBay, and said eBay deals in pornography.

Responding to questions, Mr. Kepas affirmed he supports Utah's Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA). He believes Utah's oil reserves will eventually be released for use, although it's unclear how that will be accomplished. Regarding illegal immigration, Mr. Kepas said we must remember this is a federal issue. The state must show compassion to those who are already here.

Dana Layton (R) introduced herself as a wife, mother, and small business owner. She said she has also had experience with negotiating with unions while conducting her business. Ms. Layton regards herself as a concerned citizen who became politically active on a local level.

She believes she brings perspectives born of her own experiences of both poverty and affluence, as a working parent and a stay-at-home mom. Issues come and go, she said. But guiding principles should ground a candidate's decisions. She will use those principles to develop her stands and guide her discussions on the issues that arise. Ms. Layton hasn't yet taken a firm stand with regards to Common Core. She favors raising scholastic standards, but has concerns about federal strings that may be attached to it.

Responding to questions, Ms. Layton said she opposes the federal health care mandate. She believes the #1 budget priority in Utah should be education.

Josie Valdez (D) hoisted a large spoon presented to her by her mother when she visited her childhood home in Arkansas. It was a gift her father had presented to his wife many years ago. That spoon was the first thing he produced

after starting work in a steel mill. It had little monetary value, but great sentimental value because it represented love, family, serving and giving. Ms. Valdez served as Director of the Small Business Association, one of only seven women appointed to that position. In that position she was responsible for a \$97 million budget and ran 27 outreach programs.

Now Ms. Valdez wants to represent the communities of Cottonwood Murray and Midvale part of Sandy and part of Holladay, which she has served for years. She was given the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce's Pathfinder award for that service. She has served women, children, minorities, and veterans. "I am the candidate that knows the needs of all of our cities and will be there to serve," she said. Ms. Valdez is running on a theme of "three Es." Economic vitality, Education, and Environment.

Responding to questions, she said she indorses the AHCA (ObamaCare) because it is important to provide health care to as many citizens as possible. Regarding the concern that Medicaid changes will make funding education more difficult, she said many ways of funding education have been proposed, but don't make it out of committee. Education growth should be a number one priority. Ms. Valdez does not support HB148

Brian Shiozawa (R) told of his grandparents immigrating to the U.S 100 years ago, adopting this country as their own and seeking the American dream. He and his wife have four children currently being educated in Utah's public schools and one son in the military. Dr. Shiozawa is an Emergency Room (ER) physician at St. Mark's Hospital. He was a panelist on the governor's Healthcare Task Force on reforming the health care system. Dr. Shiozawa sponsored and helped pass several bills in the last legislative session on preventive healthcare, public healthcare and physician/patient relationships. He intends to bring a combination of business practice, medical expertise and a respect for education to the job of state senator.

As an advocate for public education, he will seek small classroom sizes and adequate education funding.

Dr. Shiozawa believes we should revisit the state constitutional amendment that allowed state income tax to also be used for higher education. Inefficiencies in our public education system must be addressed. Federal land swaps can be a resource for new revenue immediately.

Responding to questions, Dr. Shiozawa said the most visible job of the legislature is Appropriations. The AHCA is the biggest issue we have faced in decades. Will this create a new entitlement that we can't afford? He is concerned funding the mandatory Medicaid expansion will take state money from education.

Julie McAdams, speaking for her husband, **Ben McAdams (D)**, praised her husband's work as a state senator. She said he has strengthened child safety and dealt with mass transit issues. He also listens to his constituents. Last year he passed 11 bills. He has served as a liaison between Mayor Becker and other city mayors. He is also supported by 13 of the 17 city mayors across the state.

Ms. McAdams said her husband has a track record of getting things done. Salt Lake County's population is expected to double (1M to 2M) in the next 20 years. The county mayor can influence issues of transportation, air quality, education, open spaces and the environment that will have lasting effects.

Responding to questions, Ms. McAdams said Sen. McAdams would have an open door policy. His skill set would be put to good use in building the necessary coalition between non-profits, businesses, and government.

Mark Crockett (R) said a county mayor's job is largely an executive management job. A county is responsible for Public Works, Human Services, and Community and Support Services. A county mayor needs to be someone who can effectively manage these areas and help them to thrive. He should be able to empower those working in these areas to identify and implement the most productive policies.

The Salt Lake County mayor is responsible for an almost \$1B budget. Overhauling inefficient programs while preserving vital services will be crucial.

Responding to questions, Mr. Crockett said non-profit groups can do a great deal to help match needs to services. For example, seniors might be incorporated into volunteerism programs, along with business & non-profit groups. For more information, go to www.markcrockett.com.

Reported by: Stuart Gygi and Pam Grange

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