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Bishop, Olsen tout credentials at debate

By [Josh Loftin](#)

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Two candidates for Congress in northern Utah's 1st District touted their credentials as the right kind of conservative during a Monday debate at the University of Utah's Hinckley Institute of Politics.

While Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, simply reminded the crowd of approximately 25 of his well-known conservative credentials, Democrat Steve Olsen attempted to cast himself as a nonpartisan, problem-solving moderate who would not walk lockstep with national Democrats.

"Congress, including the House of Representatives, hasn't worked well," Olsen said. "People are tired of the partisan bickering, and it's a problem for both parties. If I were there, I'd try to use my skills to get the best people talking."

Bishop, who at one point in the debate criticized "liberal Republicans" for siding with Democrats in budget negotiations, said that his votes reflect the political stances of his constituents.

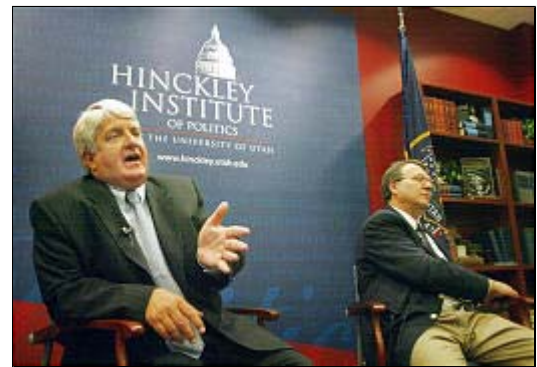
"I am a Utah conservative who represents a conservative district," he said. "I take Utah values back to Washington."

On many issues, the differences between the two candidates appeared to be in shades of gray rather than red and blue.

On gay marriage, both spoke against any legalized recognition of homosexual unions and in favor of allowing states to decide the issue for themselves. But Olsen favored some sort of legal method in which civil unions could be granted many of the same rights as marriage, a step Bishop did not support.

Both supported more research into renewable energy, such as ethanol fuel or biodiesel. They also wanted more investment in technologies that would allow nuclear waste to be recycled as a way to expand the nuclear power options in the country.

Only on the mining of fossil fuels domestically, such as oil shale in eastern Utah, did their opinions truly separate.



First District Rep. Rob Bishop and challenger Steve Olsen debate at Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah Monday.

Sarah Ause, Deseret Morning News

"It is the perfect example of how we have resources in this country that, if we use them, could give us energy independence," Bishop said, noting that research has improved the methods used to extract the fuels so as to minimize environmental damage.

The environmental problems with fossil fuels, Olsen said, are not necessarily the production but the use. Greenhouse gases produced by oil are causing global warming, so the real impetus for finding alternative sources should be the reduction of those gases, he said.

"Sometime, the human race will have to learn to live without fossil fuels," he said. "We need to work on everything, but I would emphasize renewable fuels."

The candidates also debated options for solving health-care issues, immigration problems and the Middle East.

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