

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

Utah House District 28 candidates debate at Hinckley Institute

Rochelle McConkie

Posted: 9/27/06

With education, tax reform, government openness and transportation as key issues, residents of Utah House District 28 are set to decide which direction to take their district on Nov. 7.

At the Hinckley Institute of Politics on Tuesday, Democratic incumbent Roz McGee and her Republican challenger, Thomas Wright, debated issues facing voters in District 28, a region composed of eastern Salt Lake City citizens, including the U campus.

Both candidates, along with many students attending the Hinckley Caucus Room forum, were concerned with issues regarding higher education- specifically dealing with inadequate state funding and increased tuition rates for U students.

McGee, who advocates a balanced representation in government, said, "We're not going to get a change in higher education funding until we get a change in government."

Wright also said that he supports more funding for the U.

"We can't have students not finish college because they can't afford it," he said.

Both candidates are alumni of the U.

When it comes to U funding, Porter Morgan, a senior in political science and psychology, said he supports McGee. "She seems to be more on the side of the students instead of just saying we need more money-she has a plan of action," he said.

But not all students agreed.

Elizabeth Cromar, a junior in political science, said she supports Wright with education financing. "He is against illegal immigrants paying in-state tuition-I'm a United States citizen, and I pay out of state tuition," she said.

In a community where it is not uncommon to find classrooms packed with more than 40 students and where teachers are frequently moving to other states because of inadequate pay, education reform was also a core issue during the debate.

Wright, who grew up in District 28 and attended Clayton Junior High and East High School, said he supports reducing class sizes in kindergarten through third grade classrooms first, assessing the results before spreading throughout other grades.

He also said he supports having merit-based pay and hiring bonuses for teachers.

McGee said, "We don't have to wait for proven results to see that reducing class sizes works."

McGee said she supports increasing teacher pay across the board to retain the quality teachers already working in District 28 and providing resources for early reading and literacy.

On the issue of government openness and accountability, McGee advocates her party's position on holding open caucuses, criticizing Republicans for holding closed-door meetings. She stressed the importance of state government reform to decrease the influence of lobbyists in legislation and promotes campaign finance reform.

"I am willing to risk dissent. I'm running to reform government in the state of Utah," McGee said, "and the residents in District 28 also want reform."

Wright, however, is not running to reform state government. He said, "I'm a moderate Republican that will sit at the majority while still being independently minded, but I'm not out to change the status quo."

Voting against the \$70 million tax cut, McGee warned voters against tax reform that she said only benefits the wealthiest 4 to 5 percent of the population. Wright also said that instead of tax cuts, money should be given to education, health care and property tax reform.

Many U students are also concerned with transportation issues. Nick Bryner, a junior in political science, said, "I think McGee seems to be more in support of reforming transportation proposals to improve TRAX. Wright didn't seem to think they were worth the tax increase."

Both candidates view illegal immigration as a federal issue, but agree that it can be dealt with on a state level, in terms of employment and benefits.

McGee said she supports increased state funding for all essential care for illegal immigrants, while Wright said he wants to put more money back into the hands of the citizens.

McGee has served as a representative for House District 28 for the last four years.

© Copyright 2006 The Daily Utah Chronicle