

Van Drew, Grossman's differences speak loudly at Stockton debate

JOHN DeROSIER Staff Writer Oct 11, 2018



Supporters for both Seth Grossman and Jeff Van Drew clapped and called out during the debate, despite repeated requests not to.

Edward Lea / Staff Photographer

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — The debate between Jeff Van Drew and Seth Grossman at Stockton University offered two very different road maps to federal representation for South Jersey residents in the 2nd Congressional District.

Grossman, a Republican, stuck to the staunch conservatism that has defined his campaign and said he is in the race to support President Donald Trump and “expose the fake news” he says is threatening to shut down the president’s agenda.

He criticized Van Drew for being a “career politician,” arguing career politicians are to blame for the troubles the country and the state face.

“I am here to support president Trump and expose and fight against the fake news that stands in his way and recently in the way of (Supreme Court Justice) Brett Kavanaugh,” Grossman said. “The reason New Jersey’s economy hasn’t followed the national economic boom is because of mistakes made by politicians like Jeff Van Drew and (former Gov.) Chris Christie.”

Van Drew, the Democrat, defended his record as a moderate while serving in Dennis Township, on the Cape May County freeholder board and in Trenton and said a candidate who has worked his way up from being mayor of a small township to a state senator is a good choice to replace outgoing U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo.

“We are at a flashpoint right now in our country,” Van Drew said. “What kind of America do we want to see in the future? Do we want to continue to see a reality TV show on the news every night?”

The candidates held completely different views on nearly every issue.

On climate change and sea-level rise, Van Drew said the country cannot waste any more time not dealing with the issues, and that residents in the district — which includes much of the Jersey Shore and Delaware Bay — are on the front lines of the potentially devastating effects of climate change.

On immigration, Van Drew said the country must protect its border and humanely deal with the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants who are already here.

Grossman said any illegal immigrant who commits criminal acts, doesn't learn English or isn't adjusting to American life “needs to go.”

“Could you imagine crossing the border into North Korea and then asking for food stamps and housing?” Grossman said. “There has been a good start under President Trump (on immigration), and I am running for Congress to support him and his efforts.”

Both candidates had large contingents of supporters in the crowd who interrupted the debate several times by clapping or making comments out loud, despite being asked not to multiple times by moderator Mike Klein.

Van Drew added he has a 120-foot-high wind turbine on his property as well as solar panels, signaling he is fully supportive of alternative energy.

Grossman, meanwhile, said people in South Jersey who are being affected by climate change or strong storms are people who “built expensive things in the wrong place using other people's money.”

“The climate has been changing for thousands of years. Go back and ask Noah about that,” Grossman said. “I believe in American ingenuity. If someone comes up with an inexpensive form of alternative energy, then you don't need the government to fund it. The market will take care of it.”

People from outside the district even ventured in to take part in the political process.

Greg Gerhartz, 64, of Edison, Middlesex County, wore a “Bikers for Trump” shirt to the debate and registered to vote for the first time in his life Tuesday.

He said he was there with friends to support Trump candidates.

“I'm here to support the agenda,” Gerhartz said. “I think Trump has done a great job and is trying to work for what is best for the people and for this country.”

Contact: 609-272-7260 JDeRosier@pressofac.com Twitter [@ACPressDeRosier](https://twitter.com/ACPressDeRosier)