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Tuesday, November 7, 2006

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10/16/2006 7:12:01 PM

## 66th, 67th hopefuls speak here

Bill Felber Staff Writer

The two candidates for 67th District state representative suggested Sunday they'd bring sharply different legislative philosophies to the Capitol.

In the 66th District, opposing candidates drew the sharpest distinctions between themselves over the issue of mandated pay increases for employees in low-paid jobs.

The comments came during a legislative forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters held at the fire station.

Tom Hawk, Democrat, 67th District State Representative, and his Republican challenger, Dick Miller, painted distinct portraits of how they would go about their business in Topeka.

Hawk, elected by 89 votes two years ago in the closest House race in the state, said he believed in government "as an empowering vehicle. ... (that) allows us to come together to help all of us better compete and live in society."

Miller took a more individualized approach, emphasizing primarily the responsibility to provide security. "Beyond that I support a system characterized by individual responsibility ... a restrained government," Miller said.

Miller did not take Hawk's lead to endorse the final two years of the state school finance plan, approved as a three-year program last year. "I am always in favor of adequate legislative funding," he said, "but I'm not sure we know what is required." Miller said he found "no correlation between money and learning, but I find a positive correlation between motivation and learning."

Hawk voiced concern that the Legislature would pull back from the final two years of its funding commitment, but said he would have no such hesitation. "I will support those two

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years he said," also vowing to support spending on widened kindergarten and pre-school programs.

They also took different approaches to the issue of legislative support for the area's various growth-related requirements that flow from the infusion of several thousand soldiers here over the next few years. Hawk said he would support loan programs through various state agencies, and said he wants to "focus on social needs and to get K-18 (improvements) funded."

Miller, referencing his 28 years of military experience, described the issue as "basically a local community challenge." He called for an emphasis simply on making new military families feel at home. "The other things will take care of themselves," he said.

In the 66th District, the candidates drew their sharpest distinction over whether to raise the state minimum wage. Carlin advocated doing so, although she saw little likelihood that such a bill could even get out of committee, much less get a floor vote. Strawn opposed it, facetiously suggesting that the minimum be raised to \$40 an hour to please everyone. "You've got to let the market deal with salaries," he said. "The system of government setting wages failed in Eastern Europe ... it doesn't work."

On health care, Carlin suggested that all parties to the issue "come to the table" to look at costs. But she was also wary of harming the system. "We have a wonderful health care system, and we are making people well," she reminded listeners. For his part, Strawn estimated that about one-third of the state's uninsured were financially able to purchase insurance, but had chosen not to do so. He called for "driving that (percentage) down with medical savings accounts, and also called for reducing the role of "trial lawyers, who are milking the system" with lawsuits.

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