

Congressional candidates on the issues

Tom Reed: Corning Republican, lawyer, former mayor

If elected, what's your top priority?

My top priority will be getting our financial house in order. We are on the road to a national bankruptcy. On a yearly basis, our national government is now spending 1.4 trillion dollars more than it takes in. That is unsustainable and unacceptable. We must learn to live within our means and stop borrowing. The total national debt is approaching 14 trillion dollars. Our children and grandchildren will have to pay that back.

Another priority is to provide outstanding constituent service by being accessible and working at the job of representing this district 7 days a week.

How do you plan to accomplish it?

Getting our finances in order is not going to be easy and will not happen overnight. The first step is to put an immediate cap on spending. All spending. That's going to take courage because there will be tremendous pressure to spend more on virtually every program. Then we begin gradual cuts on an annual basis. This will force us to decide, as a nation, what our priorities are for spending tax dollars.

As for constituent services, our goal is to hire the best, most responsive people we can. We have put more than 72,000 miles on my car since the campaign started. That kind of work ethic will continue.

Your plan to improve the economy?

As a small businessman, I understand the challenges that businesses face. Government cannot create jobs. Government should do what it can to create an atmosphere where entrepreneurs and innovators can create the products and services of tomorrow.

There are more than 5000 small businesses in the 29th district. If each could add just one job what a difference it would make.

Unfortunately, because of the tax and regulatory burdens placed upon businesses by the federal government, people are more often discouraged from opening and growing businesses. We have to unleash capitalism again and the government needs to encourage growth through tax cuts and incentives.

If the government begins to take steps to get out of the way, the economy will begin to improve and jobs will follow both here and nationwide.

Where should spending cuts be made?

We need an immediate spending cap and then a 5% cut in total spending each year until spending is in line with revenues so we can stop borrowing. This means a savings of at least \$190



billion each year and will force the debate on which programs are top priorities for funding and which can be cut.

In Washington, people say that they favor less spending and then exempt virtually every program from spending cuts. That isn't leadership.

An annual cut in total spending will make every program leaner and more efficient and force us to find long-term solutions to funding our military and Social Security.

Your position on the Bush tax cuts?

Keep them. In a fragile economy, the last thing we need to do is raise taxes. If the current tax rates are allowed to expire on Dec. 31, everyone will pay more on Jan. 1. The lowest tax bracket will be hit the hardest with an increase from 10% to 15%. Capital gains taxes will increase and that will have a chilling effect on the economy – it will discourage investment in new businesses and jobs. Rather than raising taxes, we need to focus on spending and living within our means. Raising taxes on this group or that group is not a solution. And raising taxes on businesses and job creators will only threaten our economic recovery.

Your view of health care reform?

I support repeal of the 2,500-page Obamacare bill, which was rushed to approval after only 48 hours of arm-twisting and deal-making. While I support some of the broad aspects of the bill such as covering pre-existing conditions, the bill did absolutely nothing to address the real problem of health care,

which is the cost.

We need to change the way health care is delivered and adopt outcome-based billing (such as some leading institutions are experimenting with). We also need to subject insurance to competitive market forces and get serious about tort reform.

Jobs will be lost because of Obamacare and health costs will continue to rise.

How can Social Security be saved?

I am opposed to privatization of Social Security. After my father passed, my mother raised the remaining six of us in our household on a social security check and his military death benefit. She taught me that a promise made is a promise kept, and I will not support any solution which jeopardizes those who rely on Social Security.

The truth is that in any long-term solution, future generations are going to have to pay for the way politicians of both parties have historically failed to address this issue. Everyone tells me that saying so is political suicide, but we have to have an honest debate about long-term solutions to Social Security, regardless of political implications to one's career.

What is your view of the Afghan War?

The Taliban and Al-Qaeda are a direct threat to the security of the United States and our way of life. The issue is whether we fight that threat here in the U.S. or elsewhere in the world. We all agree it is better to fight them there. When our generals in the field tell us the threat no longer

exists in Afghanistan, then it will be time to come home. That isn't the case at this point and I oppose arbitrary timetables for withdrawal.

Are we as safe as we should be?

No. Our precarious national finances and dependence on foreign energy are the main reasons we aren't as safe as we should be. Financial security is national security. If we continue spending without making difficult decisions, our national economy will continue to weaken until our children and grandchildren owe their souls to Beijing.

When we finally learn to live within our means and fully embrace domestic energy resources such as natural gas, wind and biomass, our long-term security prospects for our nation and our way of life will improve dramatically.

Do you support abortion?

No. I am pro-life. Abortion should only be considered in very limited cases involving rape, incest, or the life of the mother.

Do you support gay marriage?

No. I believe that marriage is between a man and a woman.

What, if anything, should the United States do about Iran getting a nuclear weapon?

We have long-term commitments to the fledgling democracies in nations which border Iran. Allowing Iran to develop the capability to send a nuclear weapon into Europe, Israel or anywhere else presents an unacceptable threat to the world and further destabilizes the entire region.

Given that Iran has other obvious energy resources and Iranian President Ahmadinejad's extreme rhetoric over the years, it is difficult to believe its nuclear program is purely peaceful. I support strong sanctions against Iran, but to be effective, nations such as Russia and China must also be involved. Particularly China. We'll have to watch developments closely.

Your view of your opponent?

Matt is a bright, committed person and I deeply respect his service to our nation. Although he and I fundamentally disagree on the role of government in people's lives and business, I applaud Matt for stepping forward to run for office.

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