

# Congressional candidates on the issues

## Matt Zeller: Victor Democrat, Afghanistan war veteran

### If elected, what's your top priority?

Policy wise, our top priority must be creating new jobs and getting people back to work. So many other issues begin to fix themselves if we begin to revitalize the economy. What's the easiest way to shore up Social Security and ease our national debt? Increase the tax base.

On a more personal level however, the constituents of this district have been without representation in Congress for too long, and they deserve nothing less than a seamless transition process.

### How do you plan to accomplish it?

Our country currently rewards companies for shipping jobs overseas with your tax dollars. That's frightening to me, and it shows just how out of touch our nation's "leaders" are from you and me. We must stop outsourcing.

Green Energy will be the Industrial Revolution of the 21st Century, but we'll need bold leadership with a vision to make it a reality. Green jobs can be for us now what steel was for us in our past. We must act now though, because every modern nation worldwide is also racing to invent the products and technology of the future.

### Your plan to improve the economy?

Economies are like bodies; when the heart dies, the rest of the body withers with it. Manufacturing was our heart, and we'll need to replace it in order to survive.

Green energy is the answer – it is all-encompassing. We are perfectly positioned to grow biofuels. There are 80,000 acres of dormant farmland in Steuben County which if converted to switchgrass could represent up to \$3 billion annually.

Developing private-public partnerships that pair small businesses with our district's research institutions can take successful, small level programs like RIT's Sustainability Incubator. This is how we begin to make a difference.

### Where should spending cuts be made?

Every time people notice the price of gas increasing they should think about the record profits of big oil. Why does our country continue to fund oil subsidies for these companies that already have a stranglehold on your wallet?

I mentioned above that your tax dollars are being used to reward companies for outsourcing your job. A recent bill highlights a fundamental difference in this election. This bill would have helped to bring jobs back home where they belong. My opponent responded with his opposition saying that passing the bill may have "unintended consequences."



### Your position on the Bush tax cuts?

I oppose continuing the Bush tax cuts for our country's elite. When so many Americans are facing economic uncertainty, extending tax cuts for the top 1% will put an unfair burden on the people that can least afford it. The wealthy already got their bailout; now it's time to help the middle class by extending the tax cuts only for those families making less than \$250,000 per year. Both my opponent and I consider ourselves fiscal conservatives, yet I am the only one opposed to adding the \$4 trillion to our debt that extending the cuts for the wealthy would cost.

### Your view of health care reform?

I wouldn't have voted in favor of the health care bill. The bill never properly addressed the cost of health insurance; forcing insurance companies to compete across state lines would go a long way toward making it cheaper. I am opposed to repeal however, since the bill did accomplish three very good things.

- No longer can insurance companies deny you based on pre-existing conditions.
- It closed the Medicare Doughnut hole that for too long has cost so many of our seniors more than they can afford to pay.
- It allowed for children to remain on their parent's insurance until they're 26.

### How can Social Security be saved?

I am 100% opposed to privatization or implementing a means test to ensure Social Security remains solvent. My opponent will try and tell you he also

opposes those things, yet believes they should be "on the table," which I believe is just politician speak for supporting an unpopular idea. Currently if someone makes more than \$100,000/year, they only pay Social Security tax on their first \$100,000. The Congressional Research Service found that if we removed that cap, and then increased the benefits for those now paying more, the gap that projects Social Security will run out will be nearly closed.

### What is your view of the Afghan War?

A stable Afghanistan will not be a threat to its neighbors or us. We must fight the ideologies that push people to use terrorism as a means of achieving their goals. Our focus should be on preventing the Afghan children of today from becoming tomorrow's terrorists and developing the Afghan security forces to replace us. Our goal should be to ensure that Afghan children are educated and open the marketplace of ideas. By fighting extremist ideology we can prevent today's children from becoming tomorrow's fighters. Only then will we be able to live peacefully together.

### Are we as safe as we should be?

No. Our national debt is an issue of national security, and until our economy has its first budget surplus since President Clinton, we cannot consider ourselves as safe as we should be.

Our port security is atrocious and very clearly the weakest link in our national security; it must be shored up, and quickly. Right now approximately only 25% of shipping containers are

checked before entering our country. The potential to exploit that hole prevents us from being as safe as we should, and I think it should one of the first concerns addressed by the new Congress.

### Do you support abortion?

Just like I don't think the government should be in your gun cabinet, I don't think the government should be in your doctor's office. In my personal life, I could never make the choice to abort, but giving the government the power to make such an intensely personal choice for you, in my view, represents a government too big for me to support. I believe abortions should be safe, legal and rare.

### Do you support gay marriage?

Marriage should be a decision between two consenting adults – not the government. The government should protect rights, not deny them. I first became aware of the issue as a volunteer ambulance medic in high school. The discussion of same-sex couples and emergency-room rights came up during our medic training. While married couples were allowed to be in the emergency room while their spouse lay dying, non-married couples weren't afforded the same rights. In our society, marriage is not just a religious act; it's also a legal contract that affords couples over 1,200 different tax and property rights.

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

The United States absolutely must prevent Iran and other rogue nations from getting nuclear weapons by any means necessary. We must continue to seek diplomatic solutions to these problems, yet also be fully ready to do whatever it takes to prevent the destabilization that a nuclear Iran would represent. A nuclear Iran cannot, and will not ever be seen as an option.

### Your view of your opponent?

Our nation is facing 21st century issues and needs visionary, innovative leaders – leaders who are willing to compromise to do what is best-not just what is partisan. My opponent's ideas are proven to be on the wrong side of history. Huge tax cuts for wealthiest 1% will not stimulate the economy and the recent stock market collapse demonstrates just how costly privatizing Social Security would be. This is not the time to regress – to return to failed policies. Now is not the time to support another politician's bumper sticker solutions. Now is the time to move forward.

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## BALLOT

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workers have been asked to arrange seating and space screens farther apart to allow voters more privacy, she said.

However, the real problem may be the switch from the curtained lever machine used in the past to filling out a ballot at a desk with only a desktop cardboard screen as a barrier.

"It's like being used to taking a shower in your own home, then using the one in a locker

room," Olin said. "It's a matter of perception."

Voters also should be mindful of others' privacy and not walk directly behind them to reach the voting table, she said.

Concerns about finding where to mark the ballot can't be fixed until changes in the scanner's software are approved by the state, Olin said.

That problem may be magnified on Tuesday because the print on the full-face ballot will be even smaller to fit all of the contested races.

The board has printed poster-size ballots that will be hung up in polling places to help voters, she said. Voters who have difficulty reading the fine print also can decide to use the handicapped-accessible part of the machine, Olin said.

Olin and Democratic Elections Commissioner Joe Welch said the state audit is just another way to improve the overall voting system, which will be a "work in progress" for the next few years.

"Last year, when we were one of the first counties doing this, we made suggestions," Olin said. "Because of what we did last year the state was able to make changes for this year."

Welch said a report that out of 8,000 voters there were 11 critical voters should not be dismissed.

"We know other people are not happy," he said. "The bottom line is we do take them very seriously, whether it's one, or 11 or 111."