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Questions For Candidates

by Admin 2 • January 22, 2016

A few years ago, Comptroller Richard Eckstrom ran a guest editorial called “Questions For Candidates.” With local primary elections coming up in June, some have asked that we reprint this editorial again. It is below:

(Soon), voters in towns and cities across the state will go to the polls to choose their local leadership for the next several years. Men and women who aspire to public service are out shaking hands, putting up signs and distributing campaign handouts.

While local elections may not be as high-profile as the races for many state and federal offices, they’re important nonetheless. Your town or city council makes lots of decisions that impact you, from the taxes you pay to the quality of life you enjoy.

If you’re like many who plan to vote in an upcoming local election, you’ll carefully study each candidate and then cast your vote for the person you decide is the best fit to serve you and your community.

It’s important not just to ask where the candidates stand on issues, but also about the style of public service they plan to provide.

Here are five questions every candidate ought to answer:

- Will they commit to a totally positive campaign, based on issues rather than negative attacks against their opponents? (Often, the kind of campaign a candidate wages reflects the style of service they’ll offer.)
- Will they balance the need for public services with the taxpayers’ desire to keep as much of their own, hard-earned money as possible? (Too often, elected officials consider spending your tax dollars as the answer to every problem, without ever considering the burden that this spending places on taxpayers.)
- Will they work to ensure that decisions will be made in the open, rather than behind closed doors? (Transparency is the key to quality government.)

- If your town or city doesn't already post its check register on its Web site, will they push to accomplish this? (Already, nearly 30 cities, towns and counties in SC have begun posting their itemized expenditures online, making information about how public funds are spent easily accessible to citizens.)

- Finally, what will they do to ensure they uphold the views of those they represent? Will they distribute surveys on the issues? Will they hold regular community meetings? Will they continue to meet with citizens all year long, rather than just before election time?

Ask these questions of those who seek to represent you. Then, be sure to take the time to vote. By taking such an active part in this process, you'll be helping to keep your community healthy and strong for future generations.

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Richard Eckstrom, a CPA, is the state's Comptroller.



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