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NEWS

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Briggs King, Robinson take on issues in 37th District representative race

Special election slated for Sept. 12 for district seat

By Kevin Spence

Republican Ruth Briggs King and Democrat Rob Robinson, both of Georgetown, are running for the 37th Representative District House seat, a district created after the 2000 U.S. Census: Constituents in Georgetown, residents along a slim line on Route 9, the City of Lewes and residents living north of Millsboro are all eligible to vote in the Saturday, Sept. 12 special election.

The House seat became vacant after former Republican Rep. Joe Booth was elected to the 19th Senatorial District seat last month. That election took place following the death of Senate President Pro Tempore Thurman Adams.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Voter must bring identification to the polls. For more information, call the Sussex County Department of Elections, 3020-856-5637.

The Cape Gazette posed four questions to the candidates and their answers were limited to 100 words.

1. Hispanic residents have contributed to the population growth in the 37th Representative District. What are your legislative priorities regarding employment of undocumented immigrants?

Ruth Briggs King: As we approach the 2010 U.S. Census, the federal government has committed resources to obtain more accurate data and information regarding undocumented immigrants. As a state, we need to strongly seek assistance from the federal level to address the increasing concerns. For those who come to America through the proper channels, who want to be U.S. citizens and who want to be a part of our community, we should have a legal pathway.

For those who come here illegally, they are vulnerable on many levels. Potential immigrants are turned away each year and are unable to enter the United States lawfully; consequently, it is unfair for those ignoring our laws to enter the country and enjoy the benefits of American citizenship without the responsibility.

Rob Robinson: Immigration is a federal responsibility and the federal government needs to live up to that responsibility. In Delaware, we have to ensure that all businesses compete fairly, which is why I support House Bill 230, which will level the playing field for construction businesses by preventing companies from circumventing the law by paying workers under the table.

But there are things we can do to help businesses owned by women and minorities by ensuring they have the opportunity to bid on state contracts. Too often, special interests prevent small business from competing for government contracts, and I will stand up for Delaware small businesses.

2. Some question whether the state's Livable Delaware policy has effectively directed growth in Sussex County. What is the Legislature's role in promoting orderly growth in Sussex County? What are your legislative

Meet the Candidates

Ruth Briggs King

Political party: Republican
Hometown: Georgetown
Age: 53



Educational background: Master's degree in human resource management with concentration in instructional leadership, bachelor's degree in applied business professions, and associate's degree in medical laboratory technology.

Primary qualifications: Diverse education as well as experience in major areas including medical, education, banking and human resources; solid career based on hard work and lifelong learning; history of community service and a strong desire to be actively involved.

"This is a critical time for Sussex County and I have transferable experience and skills to lead during this time."

Robert H. Robinson, Jr.

Political party: Democrat
Hometown: Georgetown
Age: 37



Educational Background: Juris Doctorate from Washington & Lee University School of Law; master's degree in philosophy, Boston College; bachelor's degree in political science, Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia.

Primary qualifications:

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priorities on growth?

Attorney; chairman of the Georgetown Planning Commission; Georgetown Planning Commission board member, Delaware Preservation Fund.

Ruth Briggs King: Part of the concern with the Livable Delaware plan is affordable living for Delaware's workforce. Certain elements of the plan require measures that make it difficult, even for nonprofit developers, to provide housing in the working range for Sussex County residents. Workforce housing for teachers, emergency workers and service occupations would be one of my priorities. I would like to see a coordinated effort with municipalities, the county and the state to develop a picture as well as a pathway for development. I strongly believe that those closest to the neighborhood should be included in the decision process. We do not need someone from New Castle County dominating the decisions about Sussex.

Rob Robinson: There are several steps the state can take to preserve open space and plan for smart, responsible growth:

Ensure developments are not approved unless they properly address the stress they place on our roads and utilities; consider a transfer of development rights program allowing landowners to sell their development rights to concentrate development in areas where infrastructure is already in place; restore funding for the Agricultural Lands Preservation Fund to preserve as many farms as possible and keep farming as a viable industry; green construction – new construction – should incorporate the latest green technology to reduce demands on utilities; public transit – cutting down on the number of vehicles on the roads is one of the best ways to reduce congestion and pollution.

3. During the short campaign, what are the top three issues that have been raised by the voters you've spoken with?

Ruth Briggs King: The loss and lack of jobs as well as the local economy are forefront in our voters' minds. The state can't tax its way out of a recession. The second major issue is growth and development. Two proposed projects: the Lingo-Townsend project near Lewes, and the Del Pointe project near Millsboro are controversial. On both issues, I have stated that neighbors have a vested interest in the decision and their neighborhood. The third issue is the potential for one side to have total control of the government. Voters are concerned with the rapid decisions coming from Washington and don't want to see that occur in Delaware. New Delawareans don't want to see this area become another New Jersey or Maryland, and locals don't want to see one party control all and potentially end healthy debate.

Rob Robinson: Residents are concerned about jobs, manufactured homes and overdevelopment. To create jobs, we must remove the government roadblocks and cut through the red tape that prevents existing businesses from expanding and new businesses from getting started. While in civil practice, I most enjoyed helping people start businesses, working closely with them to get started, so I am familiar with the red tape and how to cut through it.

Manufactured home owners should not be forced to pay rapidly skyrocketing lot rents or face sudden eviction because the landlord decides to sell the land. We must protect them and ensure that they do not face escalating rents that price them out of their homes. The issue of overdevelopment is addressed in Question 2, above.

4. Do you support the creation of an additional gambling venue in Delaware for Sussex County?

Ruth Briggs King: Like 79 percent of Sussex Countians, I do not support gambling. But, I believe as a business owner, as well as citizen, we should have free will to make our decisions based on the law. I would not, nor have I supported sports betting or table games in Delaware.

Rob Robinson: We need to put people back to work in Sussex County, and the Del Pointe project has the potential to put thousands of Sussex Countians back to work. Del Pointe, as proposed, would be a destination for residents and visitors with many amenities that aren't available in the area. There is also a trickle-down benefit for farms and horse owners, which will help maintain open space and keep farming as a viable industry in Sussex. I am concerned that the state has become too reliant on gaming revenue in recent years, but it is only fair to have a venue in Sussex. However, I am opposed to expanding gaming by introducing table games.

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