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GOP governor candidates appear at forum

By RHYS SAUNDERS

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Five GOP candidates for Illinois governor fielded questions about subjects ranging from college tuition costs to budget reduction to 2nd Amendment rights during a forum at the University of Illinois Springfield on Wednesday.

The candidates included Sen. Bill Brady, Sen. Kirk Dillard, DuPage County Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom, Political Commentator Dan Proft and Businessman Adam Andrzejewski. The forum was hosted by the College Republicans at UIS and the Illinois College Republican Federation.

Andy McKenna, a former GOP state chairman who is also running for governor, did not attend the forum. Former Attorney General Jim Ryan, of Elmhurst, has also indicated an interest in possibly jumping in the GOP primary for governor.

College tuition increases and cuts in Monetary Award Program grants

Andrzejewski – “That’s social mobility and that is under attack right now here in Illinois, and it’s under attack because from top to bottom the culture of corruption, a culture of insiderism, where if you’re connected, you’re beholden, and if you have friends your objectives get funded first.”

Brady – “I would fully fund the MAP grants. ... Those MAP grants were built into the base budget and they should have been continued in that base budget.”

Dillard – “I support the House Republican leaders’ plan to have a tax amnesty program to fund the MAP program.”

Proft – “It’s really about prioritization about the monies that we have. The money is there to fund formations of state government, like higher education for our young people.”

Schillerstrom – “I have three students right now in college so it’s something near and dear to my heart. ... It’s another example of state government failing the people of Illinois.”

Proposed spending cuts

Andrzejewski – “I would zero out DCEO. ... We need jobs, not a jobs bureaucracy.”

Brady – “Managed care and Medicaid. We can better serve the Medicaid population by giving them access to care at an earlier entry to the system and avoid the high cost of the emergency room.” He also would eliminate overtime in the state prison system, and he called for abolishing the Illinois State Board of Education.

Dillard – “I’d start with Medicaid because it’s the state’s largest expenditure.” He also cited free mass transit rides for seniors and the All-Kids program.

Proft – “Ending the funding of a third airport that’s never going to come in Peotone, ending the boondoggle that is high-speed rail, ... and I would eliminate the bonding agencies ... that have no accountability to state government.”

Schillerstrom – “We have a 1950s pension plan, we can’t afford it anymore.” He also cited Medicaid, “over a quarter of our budget,” and management layers in the Department of Corrections.

Who’s the best candidate

Andrzejewski – “For this election cycle, if you have political experience, there’s a simple definition of that, and it means political baggage. ... I’m free of it.”

Brady – “My business experience gives me a position of understanding, my ability to communicate gives me a leg up on these individuals.”

Dillard – “For Republicans, I believe I’m the one candidate that could win the general election. My experience as Gov. Edgar’s chief of staff was invaluable and I believe I have the best geographic understanding of the state of Illinois.”

Proft – “I am the only candidate who has the problem properly diagnosed...I’m the only candidate talking about big system change ideas.”

Schillerstrom – “I’m a fresh face with a record of success who is not part of the government that has failed the people of Illinois for the last many, many years.”

Rhys Saunders can be reached at 788-1521.

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