

GOP Assembly candidates: New business key to recovery

By ERIC AVEDESIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Touting their agenda of business experience and job creation, Republican First Legislative District candidates answered the public's questions at a town hall meeting Aug. 19 at the Old Cape May Courthouse.

Incumbent Assemblyman Sam Fiocchi and Cumberland County Freeholder Jim Sauro are running against Democrats Bruce Land and incumbent Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak in the Nov. 3 general election.

Fiocchi was born and raised in Vineland and graduated from St. Augustine Prep before attending Widener University. He owned and operated his family's irrigation business, Lee Rain Inc., since 1973 before retiring as president in 2009. Fiocchi is a licensed real estate agent with Weichert Realtors in Ocean City. He served on the Cumberland County Board of Freeholders from 2011 until 2013, when he won a seat in the General Assembly.

"It's becoming increasingly hard to run businesses in New Jersey," Fiocchi said.

Sauro, a Vineland resident and businessman, graduated from Vineland High School with honors and attended Cumberland County College, Cumberland County Vo-Tech, Gloucester County College and Cape May Vo-Tech. He owns A.R. Sauro Plumbing and Heating and A.R. Sauro Watercare. Sauro previously served on the Cumberland County Board of Freeholders from 2000 to 2002, the last year serving as the board's director. He was re-elected to the freeholder board in 2014. Sauro is a radio talk show host on WVLT 92.1 FM Vineland.

"Cape May and Cumberland County has high unemployment, having businesses leave, having businesses fail," Sauro said. "It's time to send people to Trenton who have an idea of what's going on and who've dealt with local and state governments."

Fiocchi and Sauro challenged their Democrat opponents to a debate. When the Democrats didn't reply, Fiocchi and Sauro displayed lifelike cardboard cutouts of Andrzejczak and Land at the event.

"We're having a little fun, but we've actually invited these gentlemen to debate us

and talk about issues earlier in the year and they chose not to respond. In a sense, if they are elected, this is about what you're going to get," Fiocchi said.

Fiocchi and Sauro said they opposed a bill that requires all employers to provide paid sick leave for all New Jersey workers.

"I think it's horrendous. I've been an employer for many years. We have a much better paid sick leave than what the state's proposing. Those are more onerous regulations that businesses don't need," Fiocchi said. "It's a horrible intrusion of business."

Sauro said a vast percentage of employers offer employees sick leave. He said mandatory paid sick leave could dissuade small businesses and large companies from setting up shop in New Jersey.

"We already have enough regulations as it is," Sauro said. "If we are not competitive with the states around us, we will not entice businesses to come here."

Asked about the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program for Atlantic City, Fiocchi pushed for improving the business climate.

In June, the Assembly and Senate passed the PILOT legislation, a five-bill package designed to jump-start Atlantic City's ailing economy. Under the PILOT program, casinos would pay \$150 million for two years compared with the \$210 million in casino property taxes have paid in the past. Future payments would be based on casino revenues instead of property valuations.

"We've got to help businesses come in, help businesses improve, bring revenues in, hiring more people. More people will spend more money," Fiocchi said. "That's streamlining government."

Sauro said he respects Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian who "made great strides," but said more needs to be accomplished.

"It goes back to job creation. We do not have job creators coming into our area employing people so that all of these houses that can't be sold can be sold and put back on the tax map and the revenues comes in," Sauro said. "You can't do that by raising taxes on businesses by having regulations."

Both men said they support a push from South Jersey Gas to extend a natural gas pipeline through the Pinelands to the

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—Assemblyman Sam Fiocchi

former B.L. England generating station in Upper Township.

"If something happens to the main gas supply line, now you're not going to have a redundant gas supply. It will also convert a coal plant which is extremely inefficient and harmful to the environment," Fiocchi said. "On top of that, you're talking about private-sector investment."

Fiocchi said there would not be an intrusion into the environmentally sensitive areas in the Pinelands.

"I was attacked by special-interest groups. I will not be intimidated by any special-interest groups," Fiocchi said.

Asked how they would bring business into the state, Fiocchi said the government should make a pitch to retain businesses and entice business expansion.

"It comes back to cutting the red tape. Earlier this year I held a red-tape review to bring businesses in. We had about 50 stakeholders. People explained the problems they had with starting businesses, keeping businesses here, why they might want to leave New Jersey," Fiocchi said.

Sauro said neighboring states are making it easier for businesses via tax incentives.

"Job creators want to make money, but if they're not going to do it here, they're going to go somewhere else to make that money," Sauro said. "While they're making that money, they're hiring people and putting people to work."

According to Sauro, the only way to remedy the status quo would be electing a Republican majority in the state Assembly and Senate.

"We're going to work at job creation, that's what we want to do, not raise taxes on job creators," Sauro said.

Asked about a state boat tax bill Andrzejczak sponsored that would limit the sales tax on vessels to \$20,000 of the purchase price, Fiocchi proposed expanding the tax break to all boat purchases. Democrats tabled the expansion of the sales tax, but Gov. Chris Christie conditionally vetoed the bill, including language from Fiocchi's amendment, which includes a 50 percent

tax cut. "To me, it's fair. Smaller boat owners get a break instead of just the large boat owners," Fiocchi said.

Both are also opposed to the so-called "millionaire's tax," a proposal by Democratic legislators to generate additional tax revenue on 17,000 households making more than \$1 million annually. Money from this tax increase would be used to fund the state's pension system.

Fiocchi said he voted against the millionaire's tax.

"They say that insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. The Democrats have proposed this so-called millionaire's tax four or five times and the governor told them don't propose it because he would veto it. But they did it anyway," Fiocchi said. "At the end of the day, it's a job-killing tax."

Regarding municipal obligations on providing affordable housing, Sauro called the Council On Affordable Housing (COAH), which administers the Fair Housing Act, "the dumbest department that was ever formed."

"It's beyond terrible. It puts an unfair load on municipalities and the county. It has to be revamped," Sauro said.

He said contrary to existing law, abandoned houses should be rehabilitated and used as affordable housing stock instead of constructing new affordable housing units.

"Why don't we fix these houses, eliminate the blight and put families in there first?" Sauro said. "If we run out of those houses, then we build new houses. That's common sense."

Acknowledging that a referendum to allow casino gambling in North Jersey would not make it on the November ballot, Fiocchi reaffirmed his commitment to the region, which relies on Atlantic City's casino industry.

"It's not only going to hurt Atlantic City, but it's going to hurt us as well. I publicly opposed it. I've been opposite the governor on this issue," Fiocchi said. "The referendum is not going to happen this year." Sauro said creating addition-

al competition "just doesn't make any sense."

"I think Atlantic City has to move in a different direction. I think they made their mistakes," Sauro said. "Atlantic City is a family resort and they got away from that. ... Don't bury them by putting casinos elsewhere."

Allison Murphy, chief of staff to Democratic First District Sen. Jeff Van Drew, said the Democratic Assembly candidates were not invited to the Republican's Aug. 19 event. She said a debate would be scheduled through the nonpartisan League of Women Voters for sometime after Labor Day.

"We've absolutely said yes to debates in the fall," Murphy said. "We said we weren't going to do them all summer long when no one's paying attention."

She said Andrzejczak and Land were campaigning during the summer months.

Andrzejczak, of Lower Township, served two tours with the U.S. Army in Iraq and attained the rank of sergeant. During a 2008 deployment to Iraq, an anti-tank grenade hit his convoy, wounding Andrzejczak, resulting in the loss of his left leg. For his service, he received a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with Valor.

In March 2013, Andrzejczak was appointed to fill a vacancy of a retiring assemblyman. Andrzejczak won a full term to the Assembly, in the same election that Fiocchi also won.

Land, of Vineland, served as a sergeant in Vietnam, distinguished himself in 1971 while serving during combat operations in Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam.

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Hendricks

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tion, first vice president of the Cottagers Association of Cape May 2015-16 and a member of the Cape May Kiwanis.

Hendricks is a graduate of George Washington University, was a lead District of Columbia public school teacher and currently maintains an active local real estate practice.

She is known to attendees and viewers of City Council meetings for asking hard-hitting questions during public

comment and for her efforts to hold city officials accountable. Hendricks stated if elected to council, she would continue to speak with an independent voice and "work tirelessly to develop community-wide consensus and broaden participation in Cape May City government."

"I want to achieve consensus, I want to get answers, and it's time," she said. "I haven't been able to do everything I wanted to do from the podium, so I believe I need a seat at the

table," she said.

While gathering signatures on her nominating petitions, Hendricks said residents told her they wanted answers and "to know someone is listening to them."

She said she has the support

of past mayors of the city.

"I'm not coming out of the woodwork, I'm just trying another avenue because the avenue that I have been trying in a civilized manner hasn't exactly provided the answers the citizens need," Hendricks said.

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27	6:21	6:48	12:07	12:09
28	7:14	7:39	12:57	7:15
29	8:05	8:28	1:45	1:57
30	8:54	9:17	2:33	2:50
31	9:44	10:07	3:21	3:44
1	10:35	10:59	4:09	4:39
2	11:28	11:53	4:59	5:36

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