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# Seattle University Hosts Tense Congressional Debate

Naja Johnson, News Editor

Seattle University hosted the debate for the 9th Congressional District between incumbent Congressman Adam Smith and his challenger Doug Basler Oct. 25. Both candidates discussed their stances on social and economic issues including accessible voting, police reform and lowering gas prices.

Adam Smith was raised in the SeaTac area and worked as a prosecutor before being elected to the Washington state senate in 1991. Smith's main goals are providing a more inclusive economy and improving education in public schools and healthcare. He describes himself as a passionate believer in a representative democracy and believes that elected officials should actively listen to citizens to better represent the community.

"I am an absolute believer in representative democracy, my top priority is to listen to everyone, not just one person on one side or the other," Smith said during the opening minutes of the debate.

Doug Basler was raised in Spokane and owns an advertising company in Kent. He formerly served as chairman of the King County Republican party. Basler's main concerns in the 9th District include addressing rising crime, lowering gas prices and restoring the American dream. This is Basler's fifth and final time running for Congress.

"The problems we see are a direct result of what has happened in our government, so I have decided one more time to run to become a candidate for Congress," Basler said. "I am committed to representing you, your family and your values in Washington D.C.. I will do what I can to reduce crime, to solve the homelessness crisis and inflation."



Sean Campbell

Republican candidate Doug Basler (left) and Democratic incumbent Adam Smith (right) debate at Seattle University.

President Eduardo Peñalver attended the debate and described it as an important part of Seattle U’s participation in the wider community.

“One of the key ways we serve the city is by hosting vital civic events like the congressional debate between Doug Basler and Congressman Adam Smith. Events like this one are important to the city and enrich the experience for our students on campus,” Peñalver wrote to the Spectator.

The debate moderator, Mary Nam of KOMO News, began the debate with several pointed questions on the topic of democracy and how it relates to the attempt of the Trump Administration to subvert the results of the 2020 election, as well as some questions on voters’ rights and election security. The electoral count act was recently passed in the Senate and the John Lewis voting rights act was passed in Congress, but neither has been signed into law. Both candidates were asked for their opinions on those pieces of legislation and what they would do to produce more accessible voting.

Smith went first, announcing support for both pieces of legislation, citing how it gives access to groups that he argues are suppressed during the election process.

“The John Lewis Voting Rights Act makes sure people have direct access to voting,” Smith said.

“We have seen laws passed in states across the country that make it harder for people to be able to vote.”

Basler responded by questioning the integrity of the voting system in King County, though he did not offer substantiating evidence for his claims.

“I have been involved in a couple of lawsuits to see what’s going on, they tell us that we need to trust the system but we shouldn’t have to trust the system—we should know that our votes are secure,” Basler said.

Basler also stated his disapproval of mail-in voting and expressed doubt towards the efficacy of mail in ballots.

The next topic discussed was crime, a hot topic with voters. Both candidates agreed that reducing SPD funding is not the solution to the increasing crime within the district. Additionally, both Smith and Basler felt that there was a lack of police accountability present when it came to use of excessive force and police brutality.

Next, Nam questioned both candidates on rising gas prices. Smith named the cause of rising prices as oil companies while Basler said the main issue was U.S. relations with Russia. Smith introduced an alternative of a clean economy and investing in solar power.



Democratic incumbent Adam Smith. (Sean Campbell)

“We wouldn’t have to buy gas if we had an option of buying from solar and wind. If we didn’t have just the oil companies controlling us, gas inflation would go down. We have the technology to make that investment going forward,” Smith said.

Basler believes that the government and companies have the God-given right to use natural resources as they see fit.

“I believe God put us on the earth to have us take care of the earth,” Basler said. “This idea of hands-off ‘nature knows it best’ is not accurate. You don’t let the earth do its thing. I think the Democrats need to clean up their act before we get rid of our pickup trucks.”

The debate concluded with disputes over what may have been the true cause of inflation.

Basler named the cause as ‘out of control’ spending from the government. Smith named the main cause of inflation from the decrease in the supply chain.

The debate, which was punctuated by heckling from Basler supporters and a generally tense crowd, showcased the increasingly divided

atmosphere of Washington State, as well as the national split between America’s major political parties.



Republican candidate Doug Basler responds to a question. (Sean Campbell)