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Candidates talk Army site, war, economy

By: SLOAN BREWSTER , Press staff

MIDDLETOWN - Six candidates stopped by the Third Congregational Church Monday to speak about the issues affecting the state, the city and, specifically, Westfield.

The politicians shared their views and answered questions from the audience in a Meet the Candidates Forum, which was sponsored by the Westfield Residents Association.

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, D-3rd District, Sen. Paul Doyle, D-9th District and Republican Matt Lesser, who wants to unseat Ray Kalinowski, R-100th District, spoke of the Army training facility and efforts to keep it off an 88-acre property on Boardman Lane.

DeLauro said she was working with the army and is striving to find a mutually agreeable site. "I'm in constant contact with the Army," DeLauro said. "I know this town and this community opposes the [facility]."

The congresswoman also spoke of the 6.5 percent unemployment rate in Connecticut, which she said is higher than the national average. She wants to "get our economy running," and reform healthcare.

"To try to accomplish more for more people," she told the crowd of approximately 125 in the church hall.

Her opponent, Green Party candidate Ralph Ferrucci, spoke of his opposition to the war in Iraq.

"I heard some news today that bothered me," he said. "We, yesterday, went into Syria, a few miles into Syria ... to catch a terrorist ... Another war may come out of this ... [President Bush] should not be declaring war over lies and he should not be declaring war without congress' approval."

Westfield resident Jen Alexander asked the congresswoman and her opponent about tax cuts for households earning more than \$250,000.

"To me, it sounds like the Democratic party is saying its okay to have an American dream, but once you accomplish that, it's spread around," Alexander said.

DeLauro's response was about the middle-class doing poorly while the richest people in the country have done "very, very well."

"If people have the wherewithal, they should make whatever they can, but when it comes to a tax break that, should go to middle-class America," the congresswoman said. "A woman in Naugatuck said to me not too long ago, 'Rosa what do I do? Do I freeze. Do I not take prescription drugs?' She said 'I've worked my whole life, but I can't make it.'"

Ferrucci suggested promises from presidential candidate Barack Obama to reduce taxes for 95 percent of Americans would not come to fruition since there is not enough money in the economy to make room for such reductions.

"In the '30s, when Roosevelt was running he promised tax cuts, but he couldn't keep that promise because there was no money," Ferrucci said. "I'd be surprised if Obama kept that promise."

Doyle spoke of working with the Army and said he had spoken with Col. Keith Landry and is confident Boardman Lane may come off the table for the Army training facility.

"I can't say he gave me his absolute word," Doyle said.

Doyle's opponent, Republican Ralph Capanera, spoke of capping property taxes for municipalities at three percent.

"If I'm elected to the state senate, I'm going to spend my time getting government off of your back and out of your budget ... people are struggling right now ... One of my biggest issues is capping your property taxes."

For the 33rd District, Kalinowski and Lesser answered questions about expanding business verses retaining the charm of small towns in New England.

Kalinowski spoke of smart growth and suggested revamping planning and zoning laws.

Lesser said there should be a happy medium between expansion and small town charm.

Republican Catherine Johnson, candidate for the 33rd District, spoke of smart growth and expanding the transit system.

"I would like to talk about ways to create more wealth ... improved expanded transit network would make commuting better," Johnson said. "We would all benefit by more transportation choices."

Incumbent Joseph Serra, a Republican, said a big cut that would save money in the state would be to stop new school construction projects.

"Those are the type of money, big dollars that I don't think will hurt people in this room," Serra said.

To contact Sloan Brewster, call her at (860) 347-3331, ext. 211, or e-mail her at sbrewster@middletownpress.com.



Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, D-3rd District, speaks at a forum sponsored by Westfield Residents Association Monday at the Third Congregational Church in Middletown.

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