

## **2<sup>nd</sup> District Democratic candidates agree on some issues, not on others- 5/1/08**

By Cecelia Mason

**Studio Lead:** Three Democrats are competing in the second congressional district for the nomination to run against Republican Shelley Moore Capito in November. On May 13<sup>th</sup> voters will elect Thornton Cooper, Richie Robb or Anne Barth. Cecelia Mason sat down with each candidate recently to discuss their views on a variety of topics and filed this report.

**Mason:** As they travel the 18 counties that make up the second congressional district, the three Democrats seeking to unseat Republican Shelley Moore Capito are hearing from people who are unhappy with gas price increases. According to triple A the average price of a gallon of regular gas in West Virginia is three dollars 70 cents. That's about a 75 cent increase from a year ago. Richie Robb proposes freezing gas prices at three dollars a gallon:

**Robb:** And of course people immediately said that would create shortages. Hogwash. You know, we're still the leading economy in the world, we're the leading user of oil products. The oil companies in my opinion, particularly in the past eight years, have run this country for too long. Prices across the board were frozen in the 1970's. Certainly we can freeze gasoline prices now.

**Mason:** Robb says once gas prices are frozen, the country needs to develop other fuel sources. He, Cooper and Barth all agree that coal needs to be one of the alternatives and the government should put money into clean coal research. Another alternative is wind power. Installing windmills in West Virginia has been controversial. Barth is cautious about supporting wind power:

**Barth:** I know there have been concerns about wildlife and birds in particular and I think before we get too far down that path we need to talk to West Virginians and talk to experts and find out what some of the consequences will be.

**Mason:** Robb and Cooper both say developing wind power is necessary:

**Robb:** I don't think we should dismiss any energy source so certainly windmills would be part of the package.

**Cooper:** We have over 3M square miles in the country. We're going to have to put them somewhere. Now maybe Texas is a better place but I would say we need to put some in West Virginia too. And it's going to mess up the so called view scape. But it seems to me some people don't want to make any compromises whatsoever. Well that isn't going to work either because if we do nothing then we're going to be more and more at the mercy of the demagogue in Venezuela and the government of Saudi Arabia.

**Mason:** Iraq is another issue Robb, Cooper and Barth will have to deal with if one of them makes it to Congress. All three support pulling out of that country. Robb is a Vietnam veteran who has opposed the war from the beginning:

**Robb:** Every day that we're there is just a disaster for us. And it's their country. We're talking about a civilization that's been there thousands of years versus our couple hundreds of years. It's their country. They can work it out. It is clearly the biggest foreign policy disaster perhaps in this country's history.

**Mason:** Barth supports what she calls a responsible end to the Iraq war:

**Barth:** There is no military solution for Iraq. And the longer we stay there the longer they will let us bear this costly burden. And time the Iraqis stood up for their own country and their own future.

**Mason:** Cooper was an anti war activist during the Vietnam War. Cooper says opponents of that war did not imagine there would be a blood bath in Cambodia after U-S troops pulled out of Vietnam in the mid 1970's. Cooper says the U-S needs to withdraw with great caution:

**Cooper:** I do think we have a moral responsibility to make sure that we prevent a catastrophe that might arise, is likely arise, if we precipitously withdraw. We have a duty to the, of course, to get the civilians, the American civilians out. We have a duty to get our soldiers out. We have a duty to protect those Iraqis who stuck their necks out, like the interpreters and other people.

**Mason:** Access to health care is another problem that is often debated, but never solved. Cooper supports government sponsored universal health care: There's no excuse for anybody that's a citizen of this country not having universal health care.

**Cooper:** And I don't mean just access. Republicans say we already have access. Yeah, if you're rich you can pay for it. But if you're making less than the minimum wage or at least if you're working maybe ten hours a week at the minimum wage you can't afford health care. You have access but it's only theoretical.

**Mason:** Robb also supports universal health with a private insurance option for those who want it:

**Robb:** I also support a mandatory preventive health care measures where if people want to engage in unhealthy activities, sky diving, use of tobacco products, alcohol products, they will have to pay a premium for that.

**Mason:** Barth believes every American should have affordable high quality health care. She doesn't support a specific plan, and points out that if access to health care were an easy problem it would have been solved already. Barth says there are steps Congress can take now to help:

**Barth:** We need to bring down the cost of prescription drugs. We should let Medicare negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies for lower prices for prescription drugs. Second we should make sure that every child who is eligible for CHIP is covered. And third, I think we have to make sure that Medicare and Medicaid are protected.

**Mason:** All three candidates believe that tax cuts implemented during the Bush Administration that benefit the wealthy should expire. Barth, Cooper and Robb favor keeping cuts that help middle and lower income families.

For West Virginia Public Broadcasting I'm Cecelia Mason in Shepherdstown.