

Candidates promise: No mud-slinging

David Riley, Staff writer 2:31 p.m. EDT September 3, 2014



(Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto)

Local political candidates engaged in a familiar campaign-year ritual on Wednesday, vowing publicly not to make personal attacks or spread misinformation about their opponents.

Time will tell which keep their promises.

The Rochester-area League of Women Voters and the Interfaith Alliance of Rochester held a signing event Wednesday at the Monroe County Office Building for the Fair Campaign Pledge.

Sheila Abeling, vice president of the league and co-chairwoman of the fair election campaign, read off the names of candidates who signed the pledge. She said afterward that more people signed at Wednesday's event; more than half of the 39 candidates for public office in the region this year have agreed to the pledge so far.

Candidates can still sign, but the clock is ticking for some who face competition within their political parties. Primary elections are from noon to 9 p.m. Tuesday.

In addition to disavowing attacks, political hopefuls who sign the pledge agree to focus on issues, to personally approve all campaign materials and to publicly repudiate anyone who violates the pledge on their campaign's behalf, among other things.

Throughout campaign season, pledge organizers hear complaints from candidates and decide whether anyone has violated terms of the agreement. Abeling said the Fair Election Practices Committee dealt with about seven major complaints last year, but has seen more in the past.

"We look forward to a positive, fair, issue-based campaign," she said.

Last week, Monroe County Republican Committee Chairman Bill Reilich questioned the fairness of the pledge because candidates who have not signed still can file complaints about other campaigns. He said that at least once last year, a GOP candidate who agreed to the pledge faced a complaint from an opponent who had not signed.

Abeling said the idea is to make sure that voters can see how candidates conduct themselves. "Anyone, really, has a right to file a complaint as a candidate," she said.

Several candidates on hand at Wednesday's event praised the pledge and recalled past attacks they endured. State Sen. Joseph Robach, R-Greece, who is unopposed this year, said campaigns should be issue-oriented, and that he appreciates when voters see through desperate, untruthful tactics.

State Sen. Ted O'Brien, D-Irondequoit, said he was hit with political attacks in the past. "Sometimes the temptation is to punch back," he said, but it's better to focus on what's important to voters.

"I think in the face of those things, you return to the issues where there is a distinction with your opponent," he said.

Republican and former television anchor Rich Funke is challenging O'Brien for the 55th Senate District this year and also signed the pledge.

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Who signed?

Candidates who signed the Fair Campaign Pledge as of early Wednesday afternoon:

- Democrat Ted O'Brien and Republican Rich Funke, candidates for 55th state Senate District.
- Republican Joseph E. Robach, candidate for 56th state Senate District.
- Democrat Johnny G. Destino, candidate for 62nd state Senate District.

- Democrat Gary E. Pudup and Republican Peter A. Lawrence, candidates for 134th state Assembly District.
- Republicans Mark C. Johns and Calvin A. Frelief, candidates for 135th state Assembly District.
- Democrat Joseph D. Morelle, candidate for 136th state Assembly District.
- Democrat Harry B. Bronson and Republican Peterson A. Vazquez, candidates for 138th state Assembly District.
- Republican Stephen M. Hawley, candidate for 139th state Assembly District.
- Republican Brian E. Marianetti, candidate for 7th County Legislature District.
- Republican Sean M. Delehanty, candidate for 11th County Legislature District.
- Democrat Erik B. Nixon and Republican Dorothy A. Styk, candidates for 18th County Legislature District.
- Republican Jackie Smith, candidate for Clarkson Town Board.
- Republican Diana M. Christodaro, candidate for Greece Town Board.
- Republican Jennifer M. Goodrich, candidate for Hamlin Town Board.
- Republican Brian T. Ingraham, candidate for Sweden highway superintendent.
- Republican Frederick H. May, candidate for Fairport village mayor.
- Republican Kenneth G. Rohr, candidate for Fairport village trustee.

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