

The Times

GOP claims state faces crisis over affordability

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HAMILTON -- Standing outside against the backdrop of red, white and blue balloons etched with elephants, many in the state Republican leadership said they were optimistic GOP candidates will get elected this year.

"It's a Republican year," said Assemblyman Jay Webber, R-Morris, the Republican State Committee Chairman, adding that residents want less taxes and spending.

The 14th District Assembly candidates, William T. Harvey Jr., 31, an attorney who lives in Hamilton and has a law practice in Lawrence, and lifelong Hamiltonian Rob Calabro, 42, owner of Porfirio's Italian Food Markets, kicked off their campaign yesterday. Local and state officials joined a handful of residents at the Mercer County Republican Headquarters on Whitehorse Avenue in Hamilton yesterday in denouncing Gov. Jon Corzine's leadership and calling for change starting at the local and state levels.

"It's a great day to be a Republican in New Jersey. ... We think this is our year," said Webber, adding that the 14th District race would be competitive but winnable. He and others cited yesterday's Quinnipiac University Poll that found GOP gubernatorial challenger Chris Christie leading Corzine by 53 percent to 41 percent among likely voters. Many criticized Corzine and incumbent 14th District Assembly leaders Linda Greenstein, D-Plainsboro, and Wayne DeAngelo, D-Hamilton, for always voting with the governor and voting for \$2.8 billion in tax increases in fiscal year 2010.

"Change is a word we've seen thrown around a lot, but New Jersey is in need of change," Harvey said. "New Jersey is facing an affordability crisis." If elected, Harvey said he would fight against the Council on Affordable Housing's subsidized housing. Based on COAH's new "third-round" rules, which require one affordable home per five market-rate units built and one affordable home per 16 jobs created, Hamilton's obligation is 852 units by 2018.

Calabro, a lifelong township resident raising two children with a third on the way, said he wants to help "the working person and lower taxes."

Two longtime Hamiltonians and Republican Party volunteers, Florence DePativo and husband Andrew, were at the campaign kickoff yesterday.

"I'm very, very enthusiastic about the party and the candidates," Florence DePativo said. The couple, after residing in the township for 35 years, said it is becoming too expensive to live in Hamilton, and believe the Assembly candidates, if elected, will help lower taxes and curb crime.

"When you're on a fixed income, to see wasteful spending is very depressing," Florence DePativo said.

"Their records speak for themselves," said Geoffrey Borshof, the Democratic campaign manager for the 14th District, about DeAngelo and Greenstein.

Borshof said DeAngelo and Greenstein focus on what they believe are important issues. He said both DeAngelo and Greenstein have pushed for clean energy and "green-collar" jobs, and that Greenstein has focused on privacy rights and expanding Megan's Law.

Responding to the Republican leadership's concerns about tax increases, Borshof said, "the truth is the budget was cut by billions from last year" without making cuts to programs like education.

The 14th District includes Hamilton, West Windsor, Plainsboro, Cranbury, Jamesburg, Monroe and South Brunswick.