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Introducing the cordial campaign, Democrat primary opponents campaign together across Northeast Texas

By Kimberly McClenney

Bringing some much needed civility into politics are Lander Bethel of Sherman and Catherine Krantz of Emory, two Democratic candidates who are running for US Congress, Texas District 4. The March 6, 2018, Democratic primary will decide which of them goes on to face the Republican primary winner, Dr. John Cooper of Sulphur Springs or the incumbent Rep. John Ratcliffe of Heath, but meanwhile they are cordial with each other. They have a friendly respectful rapport and think they can bring a stronger message to more people by campaigning together, and so far it is working.

District 4 has not had many Democratic choices lately. There were no Democrats on the ballot for the previous two elections and there has not been a Democratic representative in District 4 since 2004. Now with two candidates to choose from, the Democrats of District 4 are coming out in droves. Over the next 7 weeks, Bethel and Krantz will be traveling all across northeast Texas hosting Town Halls and Meet and Greets. Their first joint appearance was in Rains County at a Town Hall with fellow candidate Kendall Scudder (D), who is running against state senate incumbent Bob Hall. A good size bipartisan crowd came out in below freezing weather to meet and greet the candidates and ask some tough questions. One topic of interest was medical marijuana, which sparked a lively discussion and some heartfelt pleas from the audience to decriminalize its use. Some cited family members with severe illnesses who greatly benefitted from medical marijuana. Audience members appreciated the opportunity to express their concerns, and more Town Halls are planned. This is a direct response to constituents' frustration with a lack of Town Halls from the current Congressman.

Krantz and Bethel have committed to a fast-paced schedule over the next few weeks, hosting half a dozen more joint events before the primary. "We feel like we have common goals," says Bethel. Krantz agrees, "We have the same core beliefs, we just want things to get better for our communities and this shows we are willing to work together." The idea of campaigning together is also a practical solution. District 4 stretches across northeast Texas, a three-hour drive from end to end. Coordinating events together saves time and gives more people a chance to meet them.

Both feel optimistic about their chances and think 2018 is a great year for a Democrat to take back District 4, which until 2004 had been a Democratic stronghold for over 100 years. Krantz says, "One of us is going to win the primary, and one of us is going to beat the incumbent. Those guys have had their chance, they have shown us again and again what their priorities are and it's not us! Our communities need to be a priority. They focus on tax breaks and corporate welfare while our schools are 49th in the country, our hospitals are being shut down, we have crumbling roads, bad telecommunications infrastructure ... we deserve better, it is time for someone new."

Bethel said, "The Republican delegation is creating an artificial budget crisis with their tax reform bill. They have openly said they have done this to go after Social Security and Medicare entitlements. Our seniors and veterans deserve a secure future." We deserve a representative in office who actually cares about the constituents, who isn't going to put them in harm's way, who isn't going to raid their Social Security and Medicare, someone who will look after them and come up with practical solutions to the real challenges facing the 4th District.

Bethel is very involved in the community as a 23-year resident. He is a member of the Bio-Ethics Committee of Wilson N Jones Hospital, where he interacts with patient families and staff, learning about important healthcare concerns. He has chaired the Federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program for 20 years. And he founded Grayson Disaster Relief, helping resettle hurricanes Katrina and Rita evacuees, and later, flood victims in Grayson County, for which the group received the League of Women Voters Citizen of the Year Award. He is a Presbyterian minister serving churches in Sherman and Denison. He and his wife, Genna, have raised their 3 sons in Sherman.

Krantz brings 20 years of experience in international business. For 15 years she published an internationally renowned tourism magazine and founded an award winning international music festival in a little beach town in Mexico. She promoted this town to an international audience that brought huge returns in tourism dollars and created economic development projects that sent out millions of dollars into the community. Since coming back to Texas four years ago to run her family's business, she has been very active in the Emory United Methodist Church, multiple area Chambers of Commerce, the Good Samaritans thrift store and food bank, as well as organizing community events and helping out with Rowlett's "no kill" animal shelter, among other issues close to her heart.

They will be hosting multiple Town Halls across the District. Come out and introduce yourself; tell them what your concerns are.

Texarkana – Saturday, January 20, 5:30pm, Twin City Events Center, 2101 Texas Blvd., Texarkana TX 75501. For questions and info, call Jo Ann Duman 903-276-9434.

Rockwall – Thursday, February 8, 7:00pm, Harry Meyers Community Center, 815 E. Washington St, Rockwall, TX 75087. For questions and info, call Susie Stansel 713-826-4814 or email Sue.st66@aol.com

You can find out more about the candidates on their websites:

Lander Bethel – www.bethel4congress.com

Catherine Krantz – www.catherinekrantzforcongress.com