

Capitol Alert: Candidates for California secretary of state make pitches

By Jim Miller

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Six contenders for California's top elections post made their cases Monday night at a forum in Los Angeles, voicing many of the same positions while trading a handful of jabs.

Democrats **Derek Cressman**, **Alex Padilla** and **Leland Yee**, Republican **Pete Peterson**, independent **Dan Schnur**, and Green Party member **David Curtis** have declared their candidacies to succeed Secretary of State **Debra Bowen**, who cannot run again because of term limits.

There was little mention of Bowen during the 1-1/2 hour forum. But there was a lot of talk about what is wrong with the state's election and voting processes: the creaky Cal-Access campaign-finance system, years of delays in improving the state's voter-registration database, millions of eligible residents who are not registered to vote, and overall civic disengagement.

Yee, D-San Francisco, and Padilla, D-Los Angeles, who hold large fundraising leads in the contest, largely played it safe during the forum. They also were the main targets of criticism. Schnur demanded that they vote to expel Democratic state Sens. **Rod Wright** and **Ron Calderon**, Peterson contended that they had done nothing to limit fundraising during legislative sessions, and Cressman brought up Padilla's \$79,000 fine for violating campaign-finance rules during a Los Angeles City Council race more than a decade ago.

Here are brief summaries of the candidates' main points Monday:

Cressman: Cressman called for same-day voter registration and completing improvements to California's voter-registration system. Also, he pledged to reduce the role of "big money" in politics. "The engine of our democracy is sputtering," he said.

Peterson: Peterson said his background in technology and marketing make him the best person for the job. He strongly supports touch-screen voting. "Ink-a-vote is not cutting it," he said.

Schnur: Schnur called for a fundraising ban during the legislative session to "break the link between political giving and government action." More civics classes and volunteering, and not just technological improvements, would increase voter participation, he said.

Yee: Yee said he would work to increase the state's voter registration rates. He also supports pre-registering teenagers before they turn 18. He said his support for reimbursing local governments' costs for complying with public-records requests shows he would improve the Cal-Access system.

Curtis: Curtis blamed a patchwork of different county voting systems for technological problems confronting state elections. "California has some people who can solve these problems," he said. The state needs to invest in modern voting machines, he said.

Padilla: Padilla said his degree in engineering and ability to work across party lines in the Legislature would make him an effective secretary of state. He also pledged to increase registration rates. And like Cressman, he supports same-day voter registration.

The main sponsors of Monday's forum were the American Civil Liberties Union of California, the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, and the California Endowment's Center for Healthy Communities.

Read more here: <http://www.sanluisobispo.com/2014/03/04/2954481/capitol-alert-candidates-for-california.html#storylink=cpy>