

# Dan Morain: McClintock faces credible threat

BY DAN MORAIN

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Rep. Tom McClintock, a career politician who is a master of anti-government rhetoric, occupies a safe Republican congressional district.

But this year, the seat that stretches from Roseville and Lincoln east to Lake Tahoe and south past Yosemite into eastern Fresno County could become a battleground in the struggle for control of the Grand Old Party.

McClintock was one of 60 House Republicans who led the shutdown of the federal government last October, in a loopy attempt to end government funding for the Affordable Care Act.

"That's what convinced me to run," Art Moore told me recently. "There was no excuse. It had national-security implications."

Moore, a Republican, called himself a conservative, but thinks representatives should deliver for folks back home. To be taken seriously, he will need to raise a lot of money quickly. But he's being guided by a veteran strategist, Rob Stutzman, who generally doesn't work for free.

Not yet 36, Moore represents much that McClintock is not. McClintock, 57, lives 40 miles outside the district in Elk Grove. Moore grew up in Auburn, was a Boy Scout and Eagle Scout there, and graduated from Placer High.

He wears a class ring from West Point, the U.S. Military Academy from which he graduated in 2000. He became an Army major, served multiple tours of duty in Iraq, Kuwait and Egypt, and is in the National Guard.

When he stepped away from a military career, he worked for a building-supply company and more recently for the consulting firm Deloitte in Washington, D.C., holding a top-secret clearance and providing advice to intelligence agencies. He moved back to the district in December and lives in Roseville.

McClintock, who has stopped talking to me, got his start in politics in his 20s by working as state Senate aide. He won an Assembly seat in 1982 at age 26, served 22 years in the Legislature, with a two-year break, and went to Congress in 2008 when he was termed out of the Legislature.

The contrast between Moore and McClintock goes beyond résumés. Moore talks about making government work, finding ways to improve Lake Tahoe, spending tax money on flood-control projects, and building an alliance with Democrats such as Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

"We just need better representation," Moore said.

McClintock is one of only four House members who received 100% pure ratings in 2013 from the conservative advocacy groups Freedomworks and Club for Growth. Heritage Action for America gave him a 91% score, the highest for any House member from California.

To achieve celestial status among conservatives, McClintock voted against raising the debt ceiling, against the Hurricane Sandy emergency relief legislation and against the farm bill.

Freedomworks lauded him for voting to cut \$100 million from the Essential Air Service, a subsidy so air carriers can provide service to less-traveled airports. Airports in Merced and Visalia, for example, provide commercial air service because of a combined \$3.4 million in subsidies

Earlier this month, McClintock joined 85 Republicans and five Democrats by voting against House Resolution 3370, which seeks to ease the sticker shock of a run-up in federally subsidized flood-insurance premiums.

The Club for Growth denounced the federal flood-insurance program as "hostile to liberty and limited government."

McClintock's standing among conservative groups could be his salvation. Freedomworks and the others will spend tens of millions challenging U.S. Chamber of Commerce-backed Republicans, and, in some instances, Republicans backed by Speaker John Boehner.

In my interview, Moore sat ramrod straight and directly answered questions about his positions: Opposes Obamacare. Doesn't care if same-sex couples marry. Believes gays should have been admitted to the military 10 years ago. Thinks reproductive questions ought to be left to women and their doctors, though he'd vote against government funding of abortion and opposes abortion personally.

Moore has never voted, but not because he was too busy. He followed a traditional view that military officers should remain apolitical. That allows them to provide civilian leaders their best advice, with "no question about your loyalties," he said.

Hot-button issues aside, he believes the federal government has a role in flood control, thinks Congress needs to pay its obligations, and has faith that a more active member of Congress can improve life in the district and nation.

Without a doubt, Congressional District 4, which has 66,000 more Republicans than Democrats, will remain a Republican seat for years to come. The question for the district's voters is simple: Do they want their congressional member to ruminate, speechify and argue fine points of what it means to be conservative, or do they want a legislator who will legislate?

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