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Election Time: AZ-1

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Distinctly Catholic

UPDATE (10/26) There have been no new polls in this race, and both Real Clear Politics and the Cook Report continue to list the race as "Lean Republican." Paul Gosar, a dentist, is the particular Republican the voters in AZ-1 are leaning to, and it looks like incumbent Anne Kirkpatrick is going to be a one-term congresswoman.

Here is a link to an article from the local press that shows the challenge for Kirkpatrick: people want a change. And, in Arizona, resentment against Washington was reinforced when the Justice Department sued the state over its anti-immigrant law. With McCain running away with his race for the Senate and Gov. Jan Brewer cruising to victory in the governor's race, the wind is at Gosar's back. Last minute ads attacking his inability to pay his taxes on time may not be enough to turn the tide for the incumbent.

ORIGINAL POST:Dr. Paul Gosar is a veritable font of misinformation about the abortion provisions in the health care reform law but that may not prevent him from becoming the next congressman from Arizona's First Congressional District. Gosar is challenging incumbent Democrat Ann Kirkpatrick, who won the seat in an open race in 2008.

On his website, Gosar takes aim at President Obama's Executive Order, clarifying the statutory prohibitions against federal funding of abortion in the reform law. He calls the Executive Order "unconstitutional" and argues that executive orders are usually reserved for times of extreme national emergency, and he cites Lincoln and FDR for issuing such orders. Funny, he does not seem to have minded President Bush's issuance of an executive order limiting embryonic stem cell research. Was that "unconstitutional"?

Gosar says that, because the Executive order is an unconstitutional sham, anyone who voted in favor of the health care bill, as Kirkpatrick did, voted in favor of federal funding of abortion. Wrong again. If

individuals wish to purchase abortion coverage, they will need to write a separate check every month for it. That check goes directly to the insurer; it does not travel through the Federal Treasury. It functions the exact same way any insurance rider functions. And, as we have already seen, when some state officials tried to set up new health care plans without properly ensuring that no federal monies were going to plans that fund abortions, the Department of Health and Human Services stepped up within 24 hours to clarify the fact that, no, under no circumstances could federal dollars be used for any plan that included abortion services.

On immigration, Gosar repeats all the typical Republican gibberish. He is opposed to "amnesty," which is not, so far as I know, proposed by anyone. He warns about "sex trade operators" and "criminals and murderers" as if most of those who cross the border illegally are involved with such activities. Gosar proudly lists the support of Sheriffs Joe Arpaio and Paul Babeu, heroes among the nouveau nativists and, of course, from Sarah Palin.

Ann Kirkpatrick probably would have voted for the health care bill even if it had included abortion funding; She is pro-choice and has even been endorsed by Emily's List. On immigration, she opposed the Arizona law that sought to give local police authority to pull over those they "suspect" of being here without papers, but also opposed the federal government's lawsuit against the state, resulting in an injunction against enforcing the law. Her campaign website touts a variety of issues on which she voted differently from President Obama. For example, Kirkpatrick opposed the bailout of the auto industry, which may be easy to do when your district is far from Detroit, but in her rural district, where people spend a lot of time in their cars, she gets low marks on the courage meter for not only voting against the bailout, but for advertising that fact. Lest we forget "and it seems everyone has forgotten" the bailout of Detroit worked, really, really well. All three automakers are performing well, their sales moving up and their share of the market increasing. Shame on those who continue to use "bailouts" as a pejorative: they should be made to walk to work.

Arizona's eight congressional districts have three races in the state that are considered competitive. The Cook Political Report and RealClearPolitics both list the First District as "Lean Republican" and the only two recent polls show him leading by 6 and 7 points respectively. And, the district has a +6GOP rating on the Cook Partisan Voting Index. On top of all that, Gov. Jan Brewer and Sen. John McCain appear headed for strong victories at the top of the ballot, and may provide some coattails to Gosar. The one advantage that Kirkpatrick has financial: At the end of June, when the last FEC reports were filed, she had over \$800,000 in the bank compared to Gosar's \$130,000. But, with all the cash coming from independent organizations, you can bet that Karl Rove or the Chamber of Commerce or somebody is running ads taking down Kirkpatrick.

I am no fan of Kirkpatrick, but Gosar seems like the kind of screwball Tea Party-backed candidate who should not be elected dog-catcher let alone Congressman. Mind, you do not have to spend much time on Capitol Hill to realize the truth of Mark Twain's famous quip: "Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself." But, the danger for Republicans is that if they win control of Congress in November, a sufficient number of their new members will be from the yahoo, Tea Party bleachers, and that the civil war within the GOP will continue.

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