



Cleaning up Campaigns

by Autumn Nielson
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An animated discussion on politics in Utah was presented in the form of a panel of three Salt Lake County Council members on Wednesday morning in the Computer Science building.

Councilmen David Wilde, Joe Hatch and Jim Bradley were invited to discuss public funding for election campaigns and the need for those types of changes in Utah and Salt Lake County.

Each of these men come from an impressive background including degrees in psychology, U of U Doctorate, an MBA, and government consultation between these three men.

Each had their own opinion and represented different views on the matter, some of this stemming from the fact that Wilde is a Republican while Hatch and Bradley are Democrats. Each man had ten minutes to share his views on public funding for election campaigns, and a quick Q&A session followed.

Jim Bradley was the first speaker, and he focused his comments on how campaign ethics are a critical issue in government operations. Unfortunately, many campaigners and local citizens have felt like there is a "Pay to play mentality, where those who pay for the campaigning are the ones that get the action," he said.

Bradley reflected on how many of our local governments, especially in smaller and rural areas, are the most at risk for control by those who can "write the check." He also expressed concern that the reasoning behind many contributions to campaigns is self-serving.

"There aren't people who want to spend 10,000 bucks for an ethical government-they just don't care," he said. He quoted some direct examples of different firms that used the mighty dollar to sway council votes.

Joe Hatch agreed on some points that Bradley made, but said that to have a competitive political society, there is a need to push the limit of the law to "maximize the parties/individuals benefit." Joe declared himself to be one of

the more liberal members of the council, and his debate partners agreed with him, though they disputed some of the comments he made.

David Wilde brought up personal experiences in which he was faced with this exact issue the first day that he was sworn in to office. He spoke of contributors to his campaign that he worried about as he voted. Along with the other men, Wilde felt that he should be able to vote based on his own feelings, rather than being swayed by secondary concerns.

"I would like to cast a vote where I don't care who gave me the money and what is going to happen to them. I can just vote for what I think is right."

Though sparsely attended, the panel discussion was received well, and accompanied with plenty of applause.

Amanda Peterson attended the debate and was thoroughly impressed. "What fantastic dialogue. It was so critical that we had Republican and Democrat sides. The Center of Ethics at UVSC is always so careful to show both sides of the issue."

Luke Peterson, UVSC student and member of the Utah Students for Clean Elections, arranged to have the men come. Peterson introduced them and afterward said, "The debate was great. My issue is that this will be the start of many more panels. If it ends here we will have failed."

More information regarding upcoming panels is available at the Center for the Study of Ethics website: <http://www.uvsc.edu/ethics/>.

