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Hometown Focus

Republicans Gather at Lincoln Day Breakfast in Pulaski County



Office holders and dignitaries who spoke at the Pulaski County Republican Lincoln Day Breakfast April 24. Photo by John Groves

By John Groves
It was a typical spring day on Saturday the 24th of April. It was raining then light mist and back to raining again. As I approached the River church exercise building, known as the Ark, it seemed fitting that the rain was coming down around the symbol of Christian belief. Several people were scurrying around to post signs out by the north outer road or just running inside to get out of the latest down-pour of rain.

The ticket taker was posted at the door to make sure everyone had the right place and a ticket for the event and the opportunity to partake of the buffet food prepared for the gathering. There were several round tables set up on the floor with table cloths and on top of that were political advertisement for various candidates. I picked out a seat near the stage for chances of pictures of the speakers and in particular the guest speaker, Tim Garrison.

It was early yet and just a few of the people attending had shown up, however, I did see several friendly faces I knew from the municipality of Waynesville such as Clarence Liberty, the retired Police Assistant Chief and current City Councilman. Rex Larson, former candidate for Pulaski County Sheriff, Dave Ernst the County Clerk and a few other notable members of government. Dave Ernst seemed to be the man in charge of getting people to the event and director of the day's festivities.

As the state Representatives began to flow in, I introduced myself and asked if I could speak with them about their thoughts pertaining to their efforts to make the state of Missouri a better place and how the Republican Party could accomplish those tasks. The first State Representative I met was Sara

Walsh of District 50 which takes in Boone, Cole, and Moniteau Counties.

She told me that she had been to several of the Republican gatherings throughout the state and they were all packed. She also said she had been selected for her position in 2017 in a special election. I asked her what she thought was the theme of the events and she said it evolved around mostly three things, which she also agreed with. The first, was Life of the unborn; second, family and their quality of life; and third, was the Second Amendment which deals with the right to retain firearms.

I then asked her if there was a difference between what the Republican Party stood for and what the Democratic Party believed. She told me she viewed the Democratic theme as being one of liberal or more aligned with a Socialistic government with the power being replaced with the government rather than the people. She also mentioned she was in favor of each citizen having an ID for proof in the voting process and citizenship.

The second person I spoke with was Don Mayhew a State Representative of the 121st District. Mr. Mayhew said this particular event was for local politicians to gather with citizens to get them to know the candidates and their currently elected officials who represent them at various levels of the government. I asked him what his main objective was in the upcoming election of 2022 and he said to elect Republicans to fill the seats which were up for grabs at the state and national levels. He said it was imperative that the Republicans regain those seats in order to restore our government to a stable base.

As I moved about several groups of people were now coming into the building. I stopped and spoke

with Congressman Jason Smith who lives in Salem and represents that area bordering Pulaski County and Phelps County. I asked him what he thought were the priorities of the Republican party and within his district. He said "We have to take back the House in 2022." He went on to say that Congresswoman Pelosi and Senator Schumer needed to be replaced as well and restore our borders to a secure state of affairs rather than the crisis that currently exists. I asked him about the rebuilding of the infrastructure of highways and bridges in the nation. He said that only 13% of the 2.3 Trillion dollars that has been requested by the Democrats would be applied to the cost of repairs. He said the remainder of the money is set aside for personal projects or funding of things that have nothing to do what so ever with the infrastructure. Congressman Smith was a soft spoken person but quick with numbers and knowledge of the inner working of the federal monies. He said he was the chairperson for funding for the house which would explain his fast and rapid fire knowledge of each dollar requested or spent.

The room by that time was beginning to get a lot louder and more people were flowing in and laughter could be heard throughout the building as people greeted each other or introduced themselves. As the level of sound picked up, it just as quickly lowered and almost came to a dull hum as Congressman Billy Long of Springfield entered the room. His booming voice could be heard in the back areas of the room. People flocked to him as though he were a magnet or the person in charge of the event just so they could shake his hand and/or introduce themselves. It was obvious he commanded the attentions of those present. I walked up to Congressman Long and introduced myself to him and asked if he could set down with me at some point for a pointed interview and he agreed.

I did sit down with him after his part in the presentation to the audience and began the interview process. I asked him what the three most important things to him pertaining to the United States Government are. He said; "We have to regain control of the house in 2022; second, we need to regain control of the Senate in 2022; and third, we need to take back the White House in 2024." I asked him what legislation was being passed if both the Republican and Democrats were at such odds, he said there was no movement in legislation at the current time due in large part to the left wing liberal concepts they were trying to push

through. I asked Congressman Long what his thoughts were on the border policies of President Biden and he responded by saying, "They are in crisis right now and it is a total mess!" He said, "Currently we can't account for those crossing the border and in essence where they will end up inside of the United States." He also said he does not see this ending anytime soon with the current thought process of this administration.

I asked Congressman Long how he spent his time dealing with legislation and he said he, unlike a lot of his fellow lawmakers, spends his time in committee meetings and on broadband. He said those who speak on the floor to sometimes empty chambers, don't get attention or they just want to go on record as speaking for or against something. He said he prefers to move things along by dealing with people face to face in the meetings and go get his information out though volume to others.

I asked him what was the current number of people living in his district and he quickly snapped 751,000 people without hesitation. As I spoke to Congressman Long, I noticed he had an assistant near him handing out Hershey bars with the Billy Long logo on them. The assistant was never too far away in case he was summoned or if one of those candy bars needed to be handed out. Make no mistake about it, Congressman Long portrays a kind of good ole boy facade with a booming voice of his prior trade as an auctioneer, but don't be fooled. He is a shrewd businessman who has a full grasp on workings of the government both inside and out. He said he tries to spend as much time as he can with veterans who have run afoul of the government and need help to break the roadblock.

Congressman Long had a waiting line to speak to him by that time and it was getting closer to the main event so we had to break off the interview. The guest speaker of that morning had just entered the room and it was apparent by the response of the crowd who knew him or those just anxious to get to know him.

Tim Garrison (See separate Interview in this paper) was the former U.S. Attorney for Missouri. He worked his way around the room introducing himself to each and everyone. This writer had known him for several years and had the opportunity to work with him several times, however, the interview was conducted on a professional basis of information only. Dave Ernst began calling people to pass through the buffet line and then take their seats as the introduction of the candidates would begin soon. As the program began, Lt. Governor Mike Kehoe spoke about what had been accomplished in Jefferson City working with both parties, except for some issues like Expanded Medicaid.

Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft spoke on the validity of the election process in the state of Missouri due to the requirement of personnel identification as proof of the person's ability to vote. He also said the Republican party needs to regain control of the U.S. Senate and House in the upcoming election in 2022.

Other people who spoke on various subjects or echoed the



Tim Garrison with Cecilia Johnson at Pulaski County Lincoln Day Breakfast April 24. Photo by John Groves

thoughts of those who spoke before them were: Missouri Senator Justin Brown, 122nd District Representative Bill Hardwick, 142 District Representative Benne Cook, and 141st District Representative Hannah Kelly. A separate speaker was Cecilia Johnson who worked with President Trump in tandem with the President's programs and as an advisor. She related her difficult life's decisions after her child was killed in a horrific accident.

After each person had their time at the podium, Dave Ernst

asked Congressman Long to auction off items to raise funds for the Republican committee. Congressman Long began the rhythmic chant of numbers as he was seeking people to bid higher and even humorously telling people they could not bid against themselves.

The program ended on a positive note with everyone slowly leaving after making that final contact with the various political figures and the guest speakers. People were already talking about the next gathering next year with results to be seen.



Congressmen Jason Smith (back) and Billy Long spoke at the Pulaski County Lincoln Day Breakfast April 24. Photo by John Groves



Several people who attended the Pulaski County Lincoln Day Breakfast April 24. Photo by John Groves

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