

Independents practice very different politics

Falchuk, McCormick mix it up; Lively backs biblical approach

BY: [Jess Aloe](#) June 27, 2014



CommonWealth editor Bruce Mohl with gubernatorial candidates (from left) Scott Lively, Evan Falchuk, and Jeff McCormick.

THE THREE INDEPENDENT candidates running for governor said on Friday that their candidacies are an attempt to challenge the existing two-party structure and bring an outsider's perspective to running state government.

The independents may have similar goals, but their approaches are very different. Evan Falchuk, a former healthcare executive, spent much of the forum sponsored by

CommonWealth magazine and the Massachusetts Bar Association sniping at rival Jeff McCormick, a venture capitalist. Falchuk sought to portray himself as the true independent, while McCormick played up his corporate experience and the business efficiency he would bring to the State House. Scott Lively, a former attorney and minister from Springfield, said he believes a biblical approach to governing is needed in Massachusetts. He spoke about returning to

the Commonwealth he remembers from his youth.

Over half of Massachusetts voters are unenrolled, meaning they aren't officially affiliated with either the Republican or Democratic parties, and that number is growing. Still, candidates from the Democratic and Republican parties win every election.

Falchuk pointed at the high percentage of unenrolled voters coupled with low turnout numbers in recent elections as evidence of structural problems with the two-party system. "The majority of voters want something different," he said. He presented his candidacy as a way to shake up a stagnant system.

In contrast to the other independents, Falchuk is both running as an independent and trying to start a new political party, the United Independent Party. If he can win 3 percent of the vote in November, the party will be formally established. Falchuk has already submitted the required 10,000 signatures and will appear on the November ballot. The others have until July 29th to submit the signatures.

The 44 year-old father of three currently lives in Newton, where he also grew up. He helped grow the company Best Doctors Inc. as part of its executive team. Best Doctors connects people to medical experts to help them get the right diagnosis.

Jeff McCormick, a venture capitalist, agreed there are some structural problems with the two-party system. But he said his focus is not on creating a new party; instead, he wants to work on solving the state's problems.

He lives in Boston, but grew up in upstate New York in what he described as a blue-collar neighborhood near an Indian reservation. Sports, he said, were his ticket out. He played lacrosse at Syracuse and founded Saturn Partners, a venture capital firm, in 1993. At Saturn, he worked with small companies to help them grow-- including the now well-known Boston Duck Tours and e-mail management company Constant Contact.

He describes himself as middle of the road ideologically, but his reasons for running as an independent go deeper than that. Both the Massachusetts Republicans and Democrats have flaws, according to McCormick. The Republicans have "severe disconnects" and the Democrats are characterized by "power struggles and infighting." He said he's chosen to take the independent route in order to not be beholden to the party structure.

Falchuk criticized McCormick for hiring party insiders on his campaign staff, as well as not disavowing a political action committee recently organized to support independents. Falchuk called super PACs a "grave threat," and called for a constitutional amendment banning them. He said his campaign has

released a letter disavowing any support that comes from a PAC.

“I’m in favor if a super PAC wants to support good government,” McCormick responded. He also said he wants to work with anyone who wants change, even if they’re enrolled in a party, noting that there will still be a lot of Ds and Rs after legislators’ names even if an independent wins.

Scott Lively, a minister from Springfield, is perhaps the most unique candidate in the field. Deeply religious, he repeatedly spoke about the “biblical worldview” that he wants to bring to issues in Massachusetts.

According to Lively, the elites of both the Republican and Democratic parties are the same, leaving the state with essentially a one-party system. He called both parties “neofeudalists” and said that Republicans control people with “predatory corporatism” while Democrats control people with “plantation dependency.” On his website, he says he believes abortion is murder and homosexuality is condemned by God. During the forum, he said he favored parents home-schooling their children because Massachusetts schools are turning students into “socialist robots.”

The forum’s moderator, *CommonWealth* editor Bruce Mohl asked Lively what he would say to voters who were afraid of basing their government on a biblical worldview. Lively answered that the Commonwealth was

founded by people with a biblical worldview.

Regarding the rising cost of health care, Falchuk blamed the growing “monopolization” of hospitals and said he favored letting state regulators set reimbursement rates. He wants Massachusetts to study what Maryland has done with its “all payer” program, which requires that Medicare, Medicaid, insurers, and private payers are all charged roughly the same amount for health care services.

McCormick stressed the need for active primary care. Falchuk agreed, but wanted to know how it would be done. McCormick drew on his business experience, saying the state is the biggest consumer of healthcare and could influence the private companies. He called it basic capitalism.

Lively brought up the example of his personal health care plan, Samaritan Ministries, which describes itself as a “Biblical, non-insurance approach to health care.” Each member pays for a certain amount of shares, which are distributed to those who need it.

Falchuk is calling for a tax modernization commission, and a graduated tax. “Our tax structure is regressive,” he said. While he’s not sure yet if he thinks the top income bracket should pay more, he does think the tax code should be updated for a modern economy. He also wants to stop giving large tax breaks to companies unnecessarily, and cited a \$300 million break given to Intel to

incentivize keeping a factory open--which the company ended up closing anyway.

McCormick said he would not make a no-new-taxes pledge. He said he sees the need for investment in early childhood education and transportation, but would prefer to get the money by making the budget more efficient.

Lively repeated George H. W. Bush's famous 1988 line: "Read my lips, no new taxes."

Falchuk passionately declared his support for more public transit. "We're systematically under-investing in our transportation infrastructure and have been for decades," Falchuk said. He gave Gov. Deval Patrick credit for trying to invest in transportation, but faulted his execution. He also brought up the need to fix the Commonwealth's bridges. He emphatically declared his support for the South Coast rail, saying that it's been studied and discussed enough, and the time to build it is now.

McCormick said he would like to study South Coast Rail more, leading Falchuk to aggressively press him for a definitive answer on the question. McCormick said he didn't want to make a "knee-jerk response," adding that cities along the South Coast can experience rebirth without being connected to Boston.

Lively said he resented the state's large investment in public transit infrastructure most in eastern Massachusetts. But while he

favors more attention on cities in western Massachusetts, he said he doesn't want Springfield to become like Boston. He said he enjoys the slower pace of life and being able to drive across the city without hitting traffic jams. He also thinks Massachusetts residents shouldn't have to pay tolls to drive on their own roads.

All three candidates support lifting the charter cap.

But perhaps the most telling sign of the differences between the independent candidates--and what sets them apart from the established parties--was how they answered what they'd do on their first day in office.

Falchuk would call the Senate president and the Speaker. "I'm confident I could build consensus," he said. "The world would look very different if Massachusetts has elected an independent governor, and founded a new political party in the process."

McCormick would do a top-to-bottom analysis of all state agencies to find out where the problems are and where money could be saved. And he wouldn't use state employees to conduct the review. "You've got to bring in outsiders," he said.

Lively said would curl his toes up in the carpet in the governor's office, get to know the people around him, and then, because he believes in personnel as policy, he would "change the people."