



State Rep. Mike Ritze, R-Broken Arrow, was one of three legislators to address the Oklahomans for Health Care Reform forum Monday night at Northeastern State University-Broken Arrow. RIP STELL/for the Tulsa World

Trio of lawmakers present views on health-care reform

BY RANDY KREHBIEL
World Staff Writer

BROKEN ARROW — Three Oklahoma legislators presented three views of health-care reform at the state level Monday night at Northeastern State University-Broken Arrow.

Sponsored by Oklahomans for Health Care Reform, the event featured state Reps. Mike Ritze, R-Broken Arrow, and Eric Proctor, D-Tulsa, and state Sen. Jim Wilson, D-Tahlequah.

A physician himself, Ritze touted free markets and greater competition as a solution to rising health-care costs.

To that end, he said, he will introduce legislation next year to encourage more companies to offer health insurance in Oklahoma.

He blamed medical malpractice lawsuits and government mandates for half of all health-care costs, a figure disputed by Wilson.

Quoting Lenin, Ritze said nationalized health care is the first step toward socialism, and he said Medicare is at the root of the country's health-care problems.

"When Medicare started in 1965, that's when the system

started going downhill," he said.

Quoting from Matthew, Proctor said he believes that Americans have a moral imperative to care for those who cannot care for themselves.

"For me," he said, "being pro-life doesn't stop at birth."

Proctor said he favors lifting the anti-trust exemption for insurance companies, and he said partisanship at the state Capitol is keeping good ideas from becoming law.

"We're in a bad place in Oklahoma when people won't listen because there is an 'R' or a 'D' beside your name," he said. "That's where we are in the Legislature right now."

Wilson presented an extensive health-care reform proposal, saying, "The one thing we ought to be able to agree on is the waste."

"If we lowered our administrative costs to Canada's, we would save \$3.2 billion (in Oklahoma) a year," he said.

Noting the nation's low standing in most health-care rankings, Wilson said, "The health care system doesn't work as well as the government."

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Hopefuls: Preserve police force

■ Three mayoral candidates agree on that overriding point but find their differences in the details.

BY BRIAN BARBER
World Staff Writer

No Tulsa police officers' jobs should be cut as city officials work to reduce the budget by \$6 million, the three major mayoral candidates said at a forum Monday night.

Tom Adelson, the Democratic nominee; Dewey Bartlett Jr., the Republican nominee; and Mark Perkins, an independent candidate, all said they support the city's efforts to see whether the federal stimulus grant the city recently received to hire 18 more officers can be used instead to retain current officers.

But each also said he would look elsewhere for cuts, if he were the mayor, and spare the police force.

Perkins, a lawyer, said independent manpower studies have shown that the Tulsa Police Department needs more officers.

"I don't believe in a time where it seems our crime rate has been rising that we need to reduce our manpower level," he said during the forum, which was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Tulsa County News.

"That would send us in the wrong direction."

Bartlett, president of Keener Oil & Gas Co., said public safety needs to be Tulsa's funding priority.

"When you walk outside, it's important that you not only feel safe but that you are safe," he said.

Police clerical and desk positions that are held by police officers need to be



Mark Perkins (center), an independent candidate for mayor, answers questions during a mayoral candidate forum Monday at Clinton Middle School while Democrat Tom Adelson (left) listens and Republican Dewey Bartlett Jr. takes notes. SHERRY BROWN/Tulsa World

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consolidated and filled by civilians so the officers can be out on the streets, he said.

Bartlett also said the educational requirement for reserve officers should be reduced from a college degree to a high school diploma so that more people would be available to support the force.

He also said he would have the city's energy use audited to find savings.

Adelson, a state senator and lawyer, said public safety is a top responsibility for the mayor.

"Wherever we go in the city of Tulsa, we need to make sure we have the safety and security we've grown accustomed to," he said.

Adelson said he thinks the city could reduce ex-

penses by negotiating with the police union to stop allowing officers who live outside Tulsa to drive police cars home, a practice that costs about \$1.1 million a year.

He also said savings could be possible through an American Electric Power-Public Service Company of Oklahoma electricity use audit and by making sure that the city is getting all discounts it is entitled to in its vendor contracts.

Because the forum took place at Clinton Middle School, in west Tulsa, the candidates also addressed how they would move that area of the city forward.

A key component, all agreed, is completion of the long-gestating Gilcrease Expressway.

Adelson said that although road money has dried up at many levels of government, he is committed to seeing the project proceed.

"Look at the development along (U.S.) Highway 169 and what that

has done for commerce in south Tulsa," he said, adding that similar benefits would come by finally linking west and north Tulsa.

Bartlett touted himself as the candidate who has the state and federal connections to help get the expressway done.

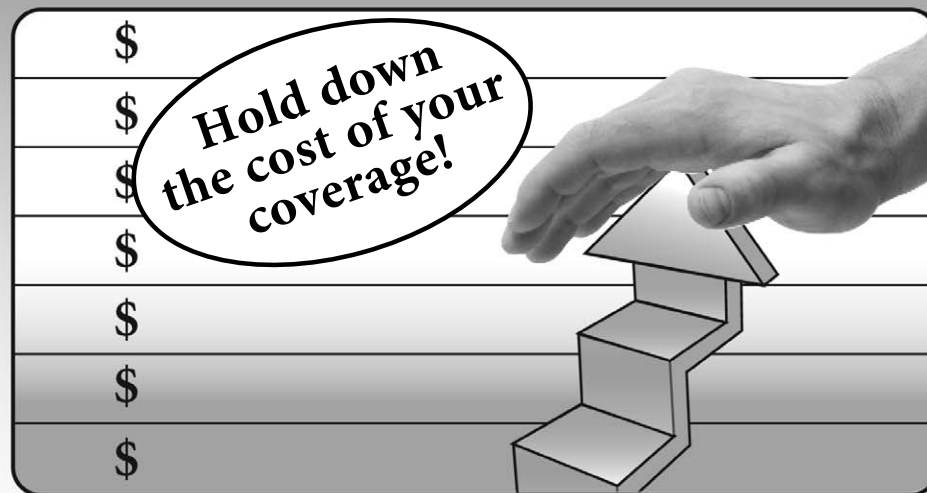
"We've been waiting around for this for decades and decades," he said, noting that it would open up a lot of land for residential and commercial development that would help the entire city.

Perkins said it is important to partner with area officials and Oklahoma's congressional delegation to make sure that a project that has been on the books for 50 years doesn't take another half-century to complete.

"What was a good idea a long time ago is still a good idea," he said. "It's critical to economic development for the city."

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60-64	\$55.00	\$42.00	\$38.80	\$29.70	\$28.00	\$21.50	\$17.20	\$13.30
65-69	\$66.00	\$51.00	\$46.50	\$36.00	\$33.50	\$26.00	\$20.50	\$16.00
70-74	\$89.00	\$69.00	\$62.60	\$48.60	\$45.00	\$35.00	\$27.40	\$21.40
75-79	\$121.00	\$98.00	\$85.00	\$68.90	\$61.00	\$49.50	\$37.00	\$30.10
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