

## Immigration dominates Sully debate

Layla Wilder

Immigration was the hot-button topic during a Sept. 25 candidates forum for several state seats in Fairfax County, a sign of the topic's prevalence in local and state races.

The candidates for the 67th Delegate District got into a particularly heated exchange over immigration bills.

While giving his statement, Republican challenger Marc Cadin said he would vote against in-state tuition for illegal immigrants, unlike incumbent Del. Chuck Caputo, his Democratic opponent.

Caputo, who represents parts of Centreville and Chantilly, later defended his vote by calling the bill Cadin referenced a "frivolous one."

He said he didn't support it because Virginians already have to declare residency in the state to get in-state tuition.

Del. Tim Hugo, who represents the 40<sup>th</sup> District and is being challenged by Democrat Rex Simmons, jumped into the debate to say it isn't "the law of the land." Some schools allow illegal immigrants, Hugo said.

At one point, all three men began talking over each other, trying to get their points across for an audience of about 20 people at the forum, which was hosted by the Sully District Council.

Cadin was talking about House Bill 2623 – legislation he brought to voters' attention last week through a campaign mailer, according to his campaign manager, Matt Seney.

The mailer states Caputo voted to allow illegal immigrants to receive an in-state tuition discount at Virginia's colleges and universities.

Joe Lestingi, Caputo's campaign manager, said the delegate voted against the legislation because it was created "to solve a problem that doesn't exist."

Sponsored by John Reid (R-Richmond), the legislation would have made it unlawful for illegal immigrants to get in-state tuition in Virginia. It passed the House but was stalled in a Senate committee.

The legislation is useless, according to the Caputo camp, because colleges and universities have their own rules in place and don't frequently admit illegal immigrants, Lestingi said.

But Hugo, who voted for the bill, later said colleges and universities across the nation do offer illegal immigrants in-state tuition.

"It's not the law of the land," Hugo said at the forum.

Like several candidates in the western part of Fairfax County, Cadin and Caputo have said while campaigning that they are preparing for immigration to be a big topic in Richmond next year.

In his mailers and campaign speeches, Cadin has proposed that federal immigration officers partner with local law enforcement officials to curb illegal immigration.

If re-elected, Caputo plans to introduce a plan to task officials at the state's Employment Commission with the ability to fine businesses that hire illegal immigrants, Lestingi said.

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