

ANALYSIS of the Candidates Running for Texas Representative, State District 118 November 2015

by Phil Sevilla

There are six candidates vying for this seat - Anthony Alcoser, Robert Casias, Gabe Farias, Michael Holdman, John Lujan, and Tomas Uresti.

TLIPA mailed voter questionnaires to all six candidates and followed up by phone calls and/or emails. Casias, Holdman, and Lujan responded in a timely fashion. Alcoser, Farias, and Uresti declined to respond to our questionnaire. I attended the South San Antonio Chamber of Commerce candidate forum on October 8th in District 118 and interviewed the three candidates who ignored our questionnaire. Alcoser was the only candidate who refused to answer my questions in person. Farias and Uresti were gracious and respectful.

TLIPA evaluates candidates' based on their voting records, public positions, affiliations, professional experience, relevant facts gleaned from the public record to ascertain their competency, temperament, experience, and values - factors which help to effectively prioritize those candidates who have the best qualifications to represent the public. Like other neighboring districts in the south side of San Antonio, District 118 has serious challenges with failing public schools, lack of job growth, and an aging infrastructure. All the candidates running for this district seat addressed these issues.

Mr. Anthony Alcoser has been working as Development Director for Texas A & M. He was formerly the Board President of Harlandale ISD. TLIPA does not believe he is qualified for this office based on his thin resume and limited experience. Displaying a remarkable lack of transparency and openness by refusing to answer questions in person about his views and values on important issues he may not agree with, it is evident he does not have the maturity and experience, ill-prepared to represent the district. He has sought and won the endorsement of the Stonewall Democrats, a homosexual advocacy organization in San Antonio.

Col. Robert Casias is a rancher from Somerset, former military officer with an admirable record of service, busy with his church, and was actively involved in the Somerset school district, which, according to him, has had one of the better records of achievement in the district. We believe he is qualified for the position and would serve his district well. He has a keen grasp of the challenges of the district. He has attempted to run for this office in the past and TLIPA has supported him. But he is currently running in a crowded field and we do not think he has the campaign organization, broad support, and resources to win this election.

Mr. Gabe Farias is the son of the incumbent, Joe Farias, who resigned as state representative of this district. He is the president of the West SA Chamber of Commerce and a sports broadcaster. We are troubled that his prescription for reforming the public schools in his district which all the candidates agreed has one of the worst records in the state is simply all about lobbying for more funding without looking at the dysfunctional performance of the school board of trustees not to mention probable corruption and conflicts of interest, questions raised by some of the candidates. He believes that state representatives are called upon to help the citizens of Texas whether they need assistance or not. Platitudes about attracting new businesses without

providing any specific ideas did not inspire confidence neither did continually raising the issue of public school funding without any appreciation for other factors which cause poor student performance. He is adamantly opposed to offering families any form of school alternatives (so were Alcoser and Uresti). We do not believe he has the experience in problem solving, an open analytical mind, nor the business and political acumen to perform well in this important state office.

Mr. Michael Holdman is a small business entrepreneur who espouses conservative fiscal and social values. We were impressed with his knowledge of the challenges facing the business and education sectors in the district. But he does not have any substantive experience serving in public office or in any significant capacity in private or public institutions. As with the case of Col. Casias, we do not believe he has broad support or a campaign strategy to win this election.

Mr. Tomas Uresti, like Gabe Farias, is a member of a political family. He has two close relatives who have prominent positions in public office representing the state and county. Mr. Uresti has been a trustee for a school board for a dozen years but did not offer a record of accomplishments in his position or any examples of his achievements in his professional capacity as legal assistant and construction business owner as evidence that he is qualified to fill the office of state representative for a district experiencing many severe challenges.

Mr. John Lujan has a very busy, diverse resume. A former retired career fireman and law enforcement officer, Mr. Lujan has had a stellar record of success as a business entrepreneur as one of the principals of a successful IT consulting firm that began with three employees and now has over three hundred. He is Vice President of Sales of Y & L Consulting ("L" stands for Lujan). He knows about public and private service as a firefighter and businessman. He also presented himself as someone with a passion for solving problems and selling his ideas which are important qualifications for a legislator. He heads a program in his company, "Educating the Educators" to assist school administrators in helping high school kids get excited about college and high paying IT jobs and to offer to the community entry level technical training for displaced workers to transition to new careers. His company's clients are both large and small corporations and institutions in the private and public sectors. Mr. Lujan has the type of creative, visionary ideas and experience that Texas needs to remain competitive and for District 118 to move forward.

Mr. Lujan was the only candidate at the forum who expressed his gratitude to an Almighty God for guiding him in his daily thoughts and actions. He took the time to mention that he is the son of a minister and he is an active member of a Baptist church in the district. This district needs a good salesman and an experienced entrepreneur to improve the district's economic and educational future. What is needed as in many other public offices are men and women like Mr. Lujan who have the diversity of experience and core values to represent the citizens and residents of the district - educational, business know-how, knowledge of the legal environment of business and government, statesmanship, ability to solve problems, adherence to core Christian moral ethics, and ability to bring people together. We believe Mr. Lujan will be able to draw public support from a broad political spectrum, Republican and Democrat alike. He embodies the best of America, one who has lived the American dream.

TLIPA endorses Mr. John Lujan for State Representative, District 118.