

## 3rd District foes trade blows

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PROVO — With a week left in their bid to unseat six-term Utah Congressman Chris Cannon, Jason Chaffetz, David Leavitt and Joe Ferguson threw some haymakers at the incumbent during a debate Saturday in Provo.

Chaffetz even threw a couple of roundhouse rights at Sen. Orrin Hatch and Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr., to the delight of most in the audience of more than 100 delegates to next weekend's state Republican convention.

Chaffetz, Leavitt and Ferguson said Utah and the state's 3rd Congressional District do get some benefit from Cannon's seniority in Congress, but all three said he'd made enough missteps that he should be replaced.

**Listen to the debate — Leavitt**

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**Listen to the debate — Ferguson**

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"Seniority does not necessarily equal influence," said Chaffetz, who then criticized Hatch for being unable

to move Congress toward passing an immigration reform bill this year. Chaffetz said he was "terribly frustrated" when Hatch told the state Legislature in February that reform would have to wait another year. Hatch is in his 32nd year in the U.S. Senate.

"Why are we sending you back for Year 34 if you can't get this issue moving?" Chaffetz said.

Chaffetz also chided Huntsman, his old boss, for embracing global warming. Chaffetz was Huntsman's campaign manager and first chief of staff.

"Note to Jon Huntsman," Chaffetz said. "Global warming? It's a farce."

Both lines drew loud applause from a roomful of conservative delegates who pushed the candidates to expand the debate from 90 minutes to 135 despite the stuffy atmosphere and dim lights in the Provo Council Chambers.

**Listen to the debate — Chaffetz**

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**Listen to the debate — Cannon**

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The lights on the candidates were dimmed at the start of the debate when Cannon pointed out they were hot and no

TV cameras were present.

Cannon's opponents tried to shine some light on their cases for why they should replace him.

After at least 16 months of campaigning, the first ballots in the race will be cast at Saturday's state Republican convention.

If one of the candidates manages to get 60 percent of the delegates' votes, he will automatically win the Republican nomination. If not, the top two will advance to the Republican primary in June.

"I think you've seen there's not seven hairs' difference between any of us," Leavitt said, emphasizing that his style and leadership would be an improvement over Cannon's.

Cannon, Chaffetz and Ferguson all felt bigger differences exist, though all four claim to be fiscal conservatives who believe in core conservative principles. They all want to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for instance, and decried the fact that the federal government owns more than half of Utah's land.

"Utah should own Utah's land," Leavitt said.

The three challengers attacked Cannon's record on immigration and said Republicans should have done more in Washington when the party controlled the White House and the U.S. House and Senate.

Cannon has proudly supported President Bush and got help from the president and first lady in his last race, but Cannon defended his own immigration record Saturday to the point of criticizing Bush's presidency.

"The Bush Administration refused to enforce the border," Cannon said. "I have voted consistently to enforce the border," including votes to use military and increase the number of police on the border.

"I have a 100 percent record on enforcement. Illegal immigration is like a cancer."

Chaffetz shared the most specifics about his immigration policy. He endorsed making English the official language of the United States and the idea of revoking the birthright to citizenship.

Chaffetz pounded Cannon for being in office while the federal budget expanded from \$1.5 trillion per year to \$2.9 trillion. The national deficit has grown to \$9.3 trillion, with \$429 billion spent last year on interest alone.

The Utah state budget is \$14 billion.

"We don't have a revenue problem in this country," Chaffetz said, "we have a spending problem," adding later, "there's nothing conservative about taking a budget and just about doubling it in 10 years. A congressman needs to be a watchdog of the president, not a lapdog for the president."

Cannon fired back at Chaffetz for living a few miles outside Utah's 3rd District, in the 2nd District, which has sent a Democrat in Congress.

"I think if Mr. Chaffetz really believed in conservative values," Cannon said, "he'd be running against his congressman, Jim Matheson."

Chaffetz responded, "I'd actually really like to get rid of both of you."

Chaffetz called fiscal discipline his signature issue and pledged not to use earmarks.

Leavitt joined in, saying with \$9 trillion in debt and \$53 trillion in unfunded liabilities for Medicare and Social Security, America is mortgaged to 95 percent of its value.

"We have serious problems in our economy and they're coming down on us hard and quickly,"

Leavitt said, blaming shortsightedness. "We have a Congress that does what it has to to get re-elected and a people that wants to live as rich as we can with as much debt as we can and when we're in trouble, we want the federal government to bail us out."

Ferguson had a practical answer.

"I recommend that everybody take \$500 to the store and go buy food," he said. "It's a good investment and good protection."

A minute later, referring to jobs going overseas, Ferguson, who bills himself as not politically correct, said, "Have you dialed in to tech support lately and had Mujibar answer the phone?"

Delegates were grateful for the debate.

"It was very helpful to see them side by side," West Valley City's Joshua Jones said. "They're all conservative, so I'm looking for concrete plans, specific ideas. Seeing them interact was helpful. It speaks volumes about how they'll interact in D.C."

Orem's Matt Owens said the debate made the race closer in his mind.

"I've got a lot of work to do in the next seven days," he said.

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