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Newsroom

Associated Press Covers AG Debate at RWU Law

An Associated Press story covering the Rhode Island attorney general debate at RWU Law was picked up by the Boston Globe and other outlets.

*Rhode Island's five Attorney General candidates -- led by two RWU Law alums, **Eric Wallin '97** and **Peter Kilmartin '98** -- debated here Tuesday night. The debate was moderated by RWU Law **Professor Bruce Kogan**, and RWU Law **Professor Jared Goldstein** sat as a member of the panel firing questions.*

***Associated Press** Writer Eric Tucker wrote a piece titled "[RI attorney general candidates meet for debate](#)," which was picked up by the **Boston Globe** and other outlets.*

BRISTOL, R.I., October 12, 2010 — Democrat **Peter Kilmartin [RWU Law '98]** on Tuesday trumpeted his career as a police officer and state lawmaker while Republican **Erik Wallin [RWU Law '97]** pointed out he was the only candidate with experience prosecuting felony cases in a wide-ranging debate Tuesday in the Rhode Island attorney general's race.

Kilmartin, a retired Pawtucket police captain and 20-year member of the General Assembly, sought to paint himself as the most experienced candidate while Wallin, a former state prosecutor, called Kilmartin politically entrenched, referred pejoratively to the legislature and his opponent's career in it, and accused him of "smoke and mirror" tactics.

The three other candidates -- independents Keven McKenna and Robert Rainville and Moderate Christopher Little -- sought to portray themselves as independent and above partisan bickering. The five candidates are vying to succeed outgoing Attorney General Patrick Lynch, who is term-limited, in the Nov. 2 election.

They were asked their positions on, among other issues, combating predatory lending, the governor's executive order on illegal immigration, whether police should be forced to record interrogations of suspects accused of major crimes and whether they would challenge the federal health care overhaul enacted this year by Congress.

Kilmartin and Wallin disagreed on many topics.

Wallin said he would join other attorneys general in suing the Obama administration over a new health care law that requires citizens to buy insurance or pay a penalty. But Kilmartin said he supported the overhaul, saying it was beneficial to children, and that he didn't think it was wise to use state resources challenging it in court.

Regardless of whether the state sues, he added, "It will not have an impact on the outcome."

Wallin voiced support for a 2008 executive order from Gov. Don Carcieri that requires state agencies and vendors doing businesses with Rhode Island to use a federal database to check the legal working status of new hires. The order also directed state police to assist with immigration enforcement.

"Every crime that's committed by an illegal immigrant is a crime that didn't have to happen if the federal government was carrying out its job, if it was protecting our borders," Wallin said.

Kilmartin did not directly answer when asked if he supported the executive order. Instead, he said he supported enlisting the state in Secure Communities, a federal initiative that matches fingerprints of suspects arrested by local police against FBI and Department of Homeland Security records to weed out potential illegal immigrants.

The other candidates argued they had the fewest ties to special interests. McKenna, for instance, criticized the attorney general's office for what he said was its historically weak record of attacking national corporations that wrong the average citizen.

"Rhode Island has standing just like New York, Connecticut -- all of the 50 states do. Fight," he shouted, "to get your money back!"

Kilmartin faced questions about whether he was too connected to the General Assembly to prosecute corruption. At one point, Little held up a newspaper front page showing Kilmartin embracing Central Falls Mayor Charles Moreau, who authorities have said they're investigating for potential malfeasance. Kilmartin rejected those concerns.

"I personally take offense when someone violates the public trust all of you put in us to represent you, to protect you, to look after you and your families," he said.

Kilmartin and Wallin agreed it would be best if police departments recorded interrogations of suspects accused of committing violent crimes. But Wallin said he wouldn't leave it to state lawmakers to pass a law requiring it.

"I don't trust the General Assembly to pass proper legislation that police officers would be able to use under every single circumstance," he said.

The candidates were also asked if they'd reopen an investigation into a 2003 nightclub fire that killed 100 people after complaints from survivors and family members that not enough people were charged.

Kilmartin and Wallin said they'd be willing to have their offices take a fresh look, and Little said he understood the anger of the victims' relatives but wasn't sure there were grounds to bring additional charges.

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