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Florida House Hopefuls Meet in Dist. 64 Forum

By [Bill Ruffy](#)

LEDGER POLITICAL EDITOR

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BARTOW | The three Republican candidates for Florida House District 64 appeared Tuesday night in the first League of Women Voters forums of this election year.

Hoping to replace Rep. Dennis Ross, R-Lakeland, who is term limited, are Jack English, Kelli Stargel and Phillip Walker, all from Lakeland. The district extends from Edgewood Avenue through North Lakeland and the county line, and then east on the north side of Interstate 4.

Each tried to highlight the subtle differences between them, mindful that the decision in this seat will be made in the Aug. 26 primary by only Republican voters. No Democrat is running, but two write-in candidates qualified at the last minute to keep members of other parties from voting in the election.

All three said they oppose "new standards for drawing legislative districts," a league euphemism for changing to a more neutral way of drawing the districts than allowing them to be cut up by the party in power, which currently is the Republican Party.

They all support the proposed marriage amendment banning gay marriage and civil unions. Also the three - Stargel; Walker, an insurance executive; and English, a former insurance executive - said the state has to stop increasing its business in property insurance and therefore its risk, and instead promote a return of the private insurance market to take the risk.

None of the three candidates would say they support Republican Gov. Charlie Crist's environmental programs, but said they believed in conservation and recycling.

"Global warming is played up in the media," Walker said.

[Florida House Hopefuls Meet in Dist. 64 Forum](#) By BILL RUFTY



[TheLedger.com](#) August 13, 2008 12:10 AM

<p>BARTOW | The three Republican candidates for Florida House District 64 appeared Tuesday night in the first League of Women Voters forums of this election year.</p><p>Hoping to replace Rep. Dennis Ross, R-Lakeland, who is term limited, are Jack English, Kelli Stargel and Phillip Walker, all from Lakeland. The district extends from Edgewood Avenue through North Lakeland and the county line, and then east on the north side of Interstate 4.</p><p>Each tried to highlight the subtle differences between them, mindful that the decision in this seat will be made in the Aug. 26 primary by only Republican voters. No Democrat is running, but two write-in candidates qualified at the last minute to keep members of other parties from voting in the election.</p><p>All three said they oppose "new standards for drawing legislative districts," a league euphemism for changing to a more neutral way of drawing the districts than allowing them to be cut up by the party in power, which currently is the Republican Party.</p><p>They all support the proposed marriage amendment banning gay marriage and civil unions. Also the three - Stargel; Walker, an insurance executive; and English, a former insurance executive - said the state has to stop increasing its business in property insurance and therefore its risk, and instead promote a return of the private insurance market to take the risk.</p><p>None of the three candidates would say they support Republican Gov. Charlie Crist's environmental programs, but said they believed in conservation and recycling.</p><p>"Global warming is played up in the media," Walker said.</p><p>English agreed, noting that as a member of the Lakeland Utilities board, he was upset with the governor's ban of new coal plants.</p><p>All three praised Sen. Paula Dockery, R-Lakeland, for her opposition to CSX Transportation's attempt to be protected from liability for train accidents it may cause on a proposed Orlando commuter rail.</p><p>"But we know it is coming, and I will do all I can to make it have the least impact on Lakeland," Walker said.</p><p>Stargel said she will fight it down the line, but also that action must be taken in the Legislature to prevent the Florida Department of Transportation from having the latitude in the future to write contracts in secret as it did with CSX.</p><p>A major difference: Stargel and Walker support school vouchers to pay for children to go to private, often religious, schools. English, a former school board member, would not.</p><p>"I understand that vouchers are Republican platform, but after 30 years, I don't even agree with my wife all the time. I am a strong proponent of the public school system. ... This (vouchers) may help middle class and wealthy students, but they still have to pay some even with vouchers, and poor kids couldn't," he said.</p><p>The League of Women Voters of Polk County will sponsor two more candidate forums. All forums are at 7 p.m. in the commission chambers in the Polk County Administration Building, 330 W. Church St. Bartow.</p><p>On Aug. 19, candidates for the Polk County Commission will be questioned. On Aug. 21, candidates for property appraiser and Polk County School Board will be in the hot seats. For more information, contact the league at 683-2328.</p><p>[Ledger Political Editor Bill Ruffy can be reached at bill.ruffy@theledger.com or at 802-

7523.]</p>

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