

ELECTION 2024

Democratic candidate holds rally to reach across political divide

■ **Democratic candidate and Republican farmer speak on panel in Cabot.**
By **JEFFREY SMITH**
Leader staff writer

Cabot resident Rodney Govens, Democratic candidate for the First Congressional District and Republican farmer Robby Bevis of Lonoke, hosted a Rally For Decency with Vote Common Good, a national faith-based nonprofit and Little Rock-based Vortex political action committee on Saturday at the Rail Yard pavilion in Cabot.

Govens is challenging Rep. Rick Crawford (R-Ark.) in the November general election. He held the event as a response to Georgia Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene's stop in Cabot earlier in the day for the Coalition of Congressional Districts One and Two, Republican Party of Arkansas meeting.

Govens said, "Campaign season is ramping up. Nerves are at an all-time high, especially for incumbent Republicans. My opponent had his cohort from Congress,

Marjorie Taylor Greene come down to Cabot and host a fundraiser. We want to present the good people of Arkansas in the light they want to be portrayed in."

"Politics has become divisive and we politicalize everything. "How did we get to this point? Police brutality and qualified immunity is seen on a weekly basis. This should not be a political issue. It is a problem in the police force we all agree that needs to be fixed. It is the same with VA benefits and the military budget," Govens said.

He continued, "You have to be able to live with your neighbors. They come in all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, religious beliefs and gender identities. At the end of the day, we are all Americans. We should all be paying taxes and be gainfully employed. That is the ultimate goal."

Cabot City Council Member Corey Spangler said Rep. Greene's speaking engagement was a boon for Democrats.

"We got a lot of notoriety for it and the protest state representative candidate Tom Bartole organized. We turned

lemons into lemonade," Spangler said.

A small group gathered on the sidewalk near the community center parking lot holding signs for Greene to go home.

Spangler continued, "(Greene) does not represent us, our town or our values. She is a faction within the Republican Party. It is frustrating to know, enough of the people that are your neighbors, friends and constituents believe in the values that she claims to espouse and invited her to come and speak."

Govens, 40, a U.S. Army veteran grew up in Columbia, S.C., and moved to Arkansas in 2017. He and his wife, Stacy have 7-year-old twins, Grayson and Zoey.

Govens ran for office in 2020, as the Democratic challenger to state Rep. Cameron Cooper (R-Romance). Govens also ran in 2022 as a Democratic challenger to Lonoke County JP-6 Jerry Cole (R) for quorum court.

He is an Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veteran, who was in the Army for over three years. He was a specialist



JEFFREY SMITH/Leader photo

From left, Lonoke farmer Robby Bevis, a Republican, sits with his friend, Cabot resident Rodney Govens, a Democrat, running against Congressman Rick Crawford (R-Ark.) in the November general election and Cabot Council Member Corey Spangler, chairman of the Lonoke County Democratic Party who were interviewed during a podcast on Saturday during the Rally for Decency at the Rail Yard pavilion in Cabot.

in the signal corps. Govens left the service in 2005. He worked as an operations manager for broadband and telecom providers serving rural Arkansas.

Bevis said his family aligned with the Democratic Party for years, but he switched to the Republican Party several years ago, over platform differences such as gun control. His uncle, William "Bill" Bevis Jr., served in the state legislature from 1998-2002. His father was Don Bevis, Lonoke County judge.

Bevis is on the Lonoke County Conservation District. Chairman of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, chairs the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council and is a Lonoke County Farm Bureau board member.

I've always voted for the person, not the party. We are trying to show, we can all come together and get along. Do we agree every day, no. But we can shake hands at the end of the night," Bevis said.

Bevis and Govens are friends and both involved with CASA. Govens volunteers as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, relating to his own experiences as a youth in the foster care system starting at age 13. Govens said being a CASA volunteer gives you the power to impact a child's life, who has no voice, especially in foster care.

Govens spoke about running against Crawford for Congress. He said Crawford and the other congressmen in the state do not advocate for Arkansan residents.

Govens said Crawford is suing the government, taxpayers, because he believes his \$174,000 salary should be increased for the cost of living and for backpay he did not receive.

"Crawford voted against the PACT Act, which allowed Vietnam Era veterans to get the benefits for being exposed to Agent Orange and toxic burn pits. He votes against the American Rescue Plan and the American infrastructure. He says we can't afford it. If we can't afford it, how can we afford to pay you back pay and a pay raise to over \$200,000 a year. You are not advocating for the people anymore, you are advocating for your pockets," Govens said.

FAMILY CLINIC

Baptist Health opens new healthcare facility in Rose City

■ **Clinic brings medical services to neighborhood after 2013 fire leaves void.**
By **DEBORAH HORN**
Leader staff writer

A Rose City healthcare clinic was a long-held dream of the North Little Rock Mayor Terry Hartwick and two City Council Members that was realized with the grand opening of the \$5 million Baptist Health Family Clinic-Rose City.

At times, Hartwick was a little teary-eyed as he spoke last Wednesday at the grand opening of the 6,500 sq. ft facility at 4200 E. Washington Ave.

"Baptist Health continues to provide quality health care and we are pleased they have partnered with our city in creating this health clinic for our residents, Hartwick said.

In August 2022, the city of North Little Rock, in collaboration with one of Arkansas's largest healthcare providers, Baptist Health, broke ground on the full-service facility.

It is already open for business, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Taggart Architects of North Little Rock designed the clinic, and Alessi Keyes Construction of Maumelle built it.

Troy Wells, president and CEO of Baptist Health, said, "In addition to advancing Baptist Health's mission of providing quality services with Christian compassion, we believe this will help improve healthcare access for residents in the Rose City neighborhood so they can get the care they need closer to home."

This was a special event for Hartwick, who grew up in Rose City and knows firsthand that quality and immediate medical attention can make a huge difference.

"I remember being treated at a local clinic for a potentially serious injury as a young child," Hartwick said.

The local medical staff was able to staple Hartwick's head wound and then sent him to the hospital.

Hartwick said he might not be serving as mayor today if not for the prompt intervention.

There was a decade-long gap between the burning down of the last medical facility in Rose City in 2013 and a new one built to fill the gap.

Maurice Taylor, Ward 2 North Little Rock City Council member who long advocated a clinic, is thrilled.

The facility is located inside his and Council Member Linda Robinson's Ward. She also supported the construction of the clinic.

Taylor said, "Having access to food, shopping, recreational activities, and healthcare make up a community. If any (piece) is missing, the balance is off. This helps right the balance missing in Rose City. It's so desperately needed."

Taylor said his constituents supported the idea of a nearby clinic, especially seniors who often have limited resources and few transportation options.

Dr. Stan Kellar, chief medical officer at Baptist Health Medical Center-North Little Rock, said, "Difficulties in accessing care contribute to the disparities in health care outcomes. Through this new clinic, we aim to improve the health of residents in Rose City."

Taylor said the clinic is "a game changer."

One of Hartwick's administrative priorities has been revitalization of the Broadway and Rose City areas.

The clinic was another step in that direction, he said.

Hartwick said, "The east part of North Little Rock is the fastest growing part of our city."

Several distribution centers, such as Ben E. Keith, Amazon, Dollar General, Lowe's, and more, and three new factories have chosen to locate their facilities in that area. Additionally, there is new home construction there.

"We are excited for this clinic to support our growth. The location of this clinic is vital for North Little Rock," Hartwick said.

Jessica Udeogu, MD, and Gia Williams, APRN, will practice at the clinic.

Dr. Udeogu is a native of Carrollton, Texas, and a residency graduate of the Baptist

Health-University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Medical Education Program.

She is board-certified by the American Board of Family Medicine.

Williams, a native of Marked Tree, received her Master of Science in Nursing from Arkansas State University (ASU) and her Doctor of Nursing Practice from Chatham University in Pittsburgh, Penn.

She is board-certified by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

Low cost vaccine clinic for cats and dogs Saturday

Cabot Animal Support Services is holding a drive-thru vaccine clinic Saturday, 8 a.m. to noon at the Cabot Freshman Academy, 18 Spirit Dr.

Dogs under three months old will be eligible for DAPPV and bordatella vaccines for

\$30, and dogs over three months of age will also receive a one year rabies vaccine for \$40. Cats under three months of age will receive FVRCP coverage for \$15, and older cats will also receive a one year rabies vaccine for \$30.

Vaccines are bundled and administered by Dr. Mike Pallone. Rabies tags will be handed out at the event, with paperwork emailed as the vaccines are entered into the shelter software. Only cash will be accepted.



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