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6 gov candidates sound off at forum

By DANIEL AXELROD
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All six major gubernatorial candidates recently vowed to increase funding to local and state initiatives to create more jobs and better job opportunities for people across Massachusetts.

The campaign pledges came Thursday at Roxbury Community College during the SkillWorks Group's "Building a 21st Century Workforce Forum on Jobs and Opportunity."

Deval Patrick, Chris Gabrieli and Attorney General Thomas Reilly are running on the Democratic ticket against Independent Christy Mihos and Republican candidate Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey.

Patrick, Gabrieli and Reilly stressed their humble beginnings.

Gabrieli and Reilly emphasized they began their journeys to the top as the children of immigrants, while Patrick talked about his childhood in the south side of Chicago.

Healey spoke very early at the event forum, but her spokesman Nate Little summarized her main points.

"She had a rough English as a

Healey, Patrick, Gabrieli, Reilly, Mihos and ROSS VOW more money for job training



From left to right, Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey, Deval Patrick, Chris Gabrieli, Attorney General Thomas Reilly, Christy Mihos and Grace Ross.

second language classes in the past and she knows how important it is for companies to find workers to fill jobs that need people to speak English," Little said.

Like the other candidates, Healey said she supports an \$8 million increase in the state budget's Adult Basic Education

line item and other funding toward different measures to give low-income workers a ladder to better careers.

Healey proposed a major policy initiative at the forum, Little said.

She advocates state-funded loan forgiveness for Bay State students that graduate with

diplomats with majors in the sciences, stay and take jobs in Massachusetts.

Deval Patrick committed to increasing state budget funding for adult education and giving millions more to employers to foster more workforce training.

"I've had some wonderful success in my life through edu-

'I grew up in New York, and when I came here I was excited to live in a commonwealth. And I thought 'Oh boy, what a cool idea, wealth is being used for the common good.'

—Green Rainbow Party candidate Grace Ross

out funds to increase worker education and job opportunities.

Patrick, Gabrieli and Mihos called for studies to analyze whether funding to various job and educational initiatives could be better spent.

With 12 different state agencies handling the distribution for various job initiatives' funding, "I'm not sure whether the competition among the agencies, public and quasi-public, is in every case as constructive as we would like," Patrick said.

Gabrieli touted his success-Turr **ORUM, Page 4**

Six gubernatorial candidates vow more money for job training at forum

From FORUM, Page 1

ful efforts to expand the number of after-school programs for children as an example of his efforts to better people's lives through education.

"I don't think there's anything I've done that I'm prouder of in my life," Gabrieli said. "There are twice as many kids in the after-school programs in Boston."

Gabrieli pledged to get more funding for initiatives to help the under- and unemployed, but he also proposed giving private sector employers tax credits to train employees.

"If you are truly giving people the opportunity to work hard and do well in this society, then you must fully fund pathways for people to do well," Gabrieli said.

Gabrieli said investing in smart ways to get people more skills isn't enough — the skills should translate into high-quality jobs in profitable sectors of the economy.

"This problem (of finding quality jobs for people) is even more profound as you get out around Pittsfield, Lawrence and Fitchburg," Gabrieli said.

Reilly touted his way to get more workers better paying jobs.

He vowed to appropriate more funding toward community college programs that train students in fast-growing fields, such as nursing.

"Finally, we need to make the system more accountable, to make sure they're doing what we need so that the workers and students coming out of those programs are really equipped to do what they're

supposed to do," Reilly said.

Reilly said he nearly dropped out of school as a child, but he had family members and others who supported and encouraged him to work his way through school.

"As I see the great potential we have throughout the commonwealth, what you need right now, and what the commonwealth needs, is a governor who cares as much about you as people cared about me," Reilly said.

Mihos said he'd use his business acumen to better spend the money in the state's coffers.

"I'd put the Turnpike Authority out of its misery and out of business and give people in western Massachusetts back the \$140 million, because they've paid for the road to be done almost twice now," Mihos said.

Mihos proposed creating a secretary of labor Cabinet position to promote regional clusters of economic development throughout the commonwealth.

"As an Independent, I represent 50 percent of the registered voters in the commonwealth and (the Independent designation) is there for a reason," Miho said. "People have had it with a two-party system. There's not a dime's worth of difference between the two parties."

"I want to be your governor," Mihos added. "I'm unbought and unbossed."

Green Rainbow Party candidate Grace Ross said she's running for governor "because more folks are hopeless and disempowered now, because the bottom 50 percent are doing

worse."

Ross said lawmakers divert too much money, in the form of sweetheart deals and tax breaks, to entice corporations to move to Massachusetts, rather than better funding programs to create more jobs throughout the state.

"We need to increase the minimum wage and make housing affordable," Ross said. "If we move the money into regular people's hands, they won't take it elsewhere. I don't know about you, but I'm not putting money in an offshore account."

Ross thinks it's important to fund initiatives to offer people better access to education and career opportunities because "most of us are working longer hours for less money."

She would create more jobs by making the state a leader in the renewable and alternative energy technology industries.

"I grew up in New York, and when I came here I was excited to live in a commonwealth," Ross said. "And I thought, 'Oh boy, what a cool idea, wealth is being used for the common good.'"

The forum's sponsor, the Boston-based SkillWorks group, oversees a \$15 million joint fund supported by 14 different funding sources, including the city of Boston, the Boston Foundation, the state and other local and national foundations.

The group strives to streamline and increase funding for workforce development and job training initiatives that are mostly located in Boston.

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