


State House hopeful Cagin comes out swinging

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Seth Cagin admits he won't be making many friends as he makes his second bid for House District 58.

The Telluride Democrat is seeking his party's nomination for the seat. If nominated, he would likely square off against Rep. Marc Catlin, who is seeking the Republican nomination again.

"I think it's important that, especially in these dire times, that every single race be contested, particularly against the do-nothing Republicans. I think it's important for voters to have a choice," Cagin said.

"I am fully aware this is a very Republican district, but I think it's important to run, even in tough districts. As far as I'm concerned, the Republicans have shown us in the way they have responded to COVID-19, their philosophy of government inaction, their response to crises in action, and it shows us how they intend to deal with the even bigger crisis, which is climate change."

There are other important issues facing the 58th District and the state, he said, but to him, the penultimate ones are climate change, which he said the Republican Party is ignoring, and income inequality.

Inequality is playing out amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Cagin said, pointing to people without health insurance, or who cannot afford access to care.

Affordable health care is an ongoing crisis, he said. "It has been especially dire on the Western Slope of Colorado. I would partner with my colleagues if elected to keep advancing that (issue)," Cagin said.

"... I would like voters to think how much better their lives would be if they didn't have to worry about the cost of health care. We're the only developed country in the world where people go bankrupt because they get sick."

Cagin also said the government needs to incentivize a transition away from fossil fuels, to deal with climate change.

"Those issues dwarf everything else as far as I'm concerned," Cagin said.

But there are others, he added, among them the proper funding of schools; the need to address the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR), which Cagin said has put the state in a stranglehold, and the need for a more "rational" taxation in the state. (TABOR is a spending-cap amendment to the Colorado constitution that applies to governmental entities, except in jurisdictions where voters have approved an exemption.)

Cagin also sees ongoing issues with water and adapting agriculture to employ more sustainable methods.

"We're in the midst of the greatest crisis since the 1930s," he said. "It is very difficult for anybody to know what issues are going to be paramount in the coming years. What we do know is the Republican philosophies of governance have failed."

Cagin labeled the party as anti-science and said it is contributing to the current crisis.

"The Republican Party has become the Trump party and it is killing people. There is no time left to tiptoe around the fact that the Republican philosophies of governance have brought us to a terrible crisis," he said.

Cagin said he does not believe Republicans somehow created COVID-19, but rather, that its response has worsened the related crisis.

"Any Republican who doesn't have the courage to step out and oppose Donald Trump should not be reelected at any level of government," he said.

Catlin pointed to a \$2 trillion federal stimulus package recently signed into law by President Trump in response to the pandemic and noted it was bipartisan.

"I don't agree with what he (Cagin) is saying. It's too bad that's being brought up now. There are big problems in this country, this state and in this district. My focus is on trying to help," Catlin said.

"We're worried about our country, about our town, about everything. We're marshaling what government can do."

Cagin acknowledged he lost by a large margin to Catlin in 2018. This time, he said, he's putting behind him his previous "naive belief" that people who had voted for Trump would have had second thoughts or concerns. Also, instead of going door to door in the district like he did last time, he will be launching a digital campaign. That's both because he found visiting 8,500 doors last election was ineffective, and also because of the state's stay-home order issued over COVID-19.

"I'm approaching this campaign differently. I would welcome the votes of people who voted for Trump or are die-hard Republicans. I'm not optimistic I'm going to get any of those votes," he said.

"What I think determines election outcomes is who turns out the vote. It's not so much about changing minds or winning people over, it's more about who turns out to vote in an election.

"I'm not trying to find common ground; I'm trying to speak truth. I still believe we have more in common than what divides us, but the polarization of American life right now makes it hard to find that common ground and occupy that common ground."

Cagin said he's seeking election again after learning nobody else in his party was planning to mount a challenge in the 58th District.

"I understand there are real obstacles for people who want to run for office. Since I had already done it, it didn't scare me off," he said. Earlier, he said: "I didn't like to see that nobody was running against Marc Catlin. I decided since nobody else stepped up, that I know the drill. I decided to give it another run."

Cagin is a Colorado native, and, as the former publisher of The Telluride Watch, is a small businessman. He said his 25 years as a reporter and editor gave him significant exposure to and knowledge of public policy issues and involvement with government.

Catlin said anyone is free to seek the seat.

"I do things that are good for the 58th District. That's what I try to focus on. I'm for everybody here. That's what I'm trying to do," he said.

Cagin said he is coming out swinging. "I'm going to be as hard-hitting as I can be. We don't have time to waste," he said.