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Wicked Local, Wellesley

State Senate hopefuls duke it out over economy

By Steven Ryan

Needham -

With Election Day quickly approaching, the state Senate candidates are heating up their campaigns, with the worldwide economic crisis — and a way for the state to navigate through it — taking center stage.

“People are scared right now; the economy is the number-one issue,” said the incumbent, Sen. [Scott Brown](#), R-Wrentham.

But in a joint interview with both candidates at Community Newspaper Company’s Needham office, the hopefuls for the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District State Senate seat emphasized different ways to battle the economic meltdown. Brown’s challenger, [Sara Orozco](#), D-Needham, placed an emphasis on the recently signed [life sciences bill](#), while Brown prepped folks for potentially painful budget cuts.

“I absolutely believe the lifeblood of our economy is going to be the life sciences bill,” Orozco said.

Orozco was referring to a \$1 billion bill Gov. Deval Patrick signed this past summer, in which state spending will go toward subsidizing life science companies.

“The way I see it, the future of Massachusetts is in the green technology and the life sciences,” Orozco said. “Where we differ, my opponent feels gambling and slot machines are the future for Massachusetts.”

Brown opposed the bill.

“Have you ever read the bill?” Brown asked his opponent, referring to the life science bill. “The reason that a fair amount of us voted against it is that it’s a million-dollar boondoggle, with 50 percent of that money going to special interest...”

Brown also responded to Orozco's assertion he supports licensed gambling. He said he does not support casino gambling, while he is in favor of a bill allowing for slot machines at racetracks. Orozco, however, said revenue from slot machines is "money that goes in and never comes out again," feeling financially backing the life sciences is more likely to produce jobs.

In one-on-one interviews later in the day, which Community Newspaper Company [posted](http://www.wickedlocal.com/needham) on www.wickedlocal.com/needham, Brown, without mentioning the life sciences bill, included investment in the life sciences and green technology as ways out of the economic crisis. He also emphasized his experience and the likely need for budget cuts.

"I'm in favor of what the governor is proposing at this point — that is consolidating, streamlining and finding savings where we can," Brown said.

"And obviously we need to invest wisely and earmark certain areas to stimulate, whether it's the health sciences, green technology or focusing on mental health, which is up 14 percent," Brown added. "It's going to be tough. We're going to have tough fiscal times, and you're going to need someone with strong leadership to get us through the tough times."

After the videos of the one-on-one and joint interviews were posted, the Democratic Party asserted Brown's statement in the one-on-one represented a "flip-flop" on his position on life sciences.

"During an editorial board meeting on Friday, Scott Brown made two contradicting statements over the course of a single interview: First, that he thinks health-care jobs will help us out of the recession and second, that the life sciences initiative that will actually help do that is a 'boondoggle,'" Massachusetts Democratic Party Chairman John Walsh said in the statement.

But Brown's campaign spokesman, Rob Cunningham, said Brown's position on the life sciences and his position on the bill itself are separate issues.

"Scott is a clear supporter of the life sciences industry," Cunningham said. "The fact of the matter is the components of that bill was a missed opportunity. It was an opportunity to invest good money in the industry. But instead, it turned into a piece of legislation filled with pork."

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