



By **Annie Knox**, **October 25, 2012** in **More Issues**

Jobs, health care and the federal budget are some of the most pressing national issues in the election in November, and they are among voters' top concerns in South Jersey's 3rd Congressional District, as well.

So those issues are the focus of the major party candidates, Republican U.S. Rep. **Jon Runyan**



Shelley Adler, Democratic candidate for Congress in South Jersey's 3rd district.

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Both Adler and Runyan called for government to rein in spending to balance the budget. For years, Runyan said, the federal government has been on “an unsustainable spending binge.” Reducing that spending, he said, means taking pressure off of government to pay for its most costly programs “that are driving up our debt,” including Medicare. Limiting the growth of health-care entitlement programs “is a critical component of finding a solution to our budget problems,” Runyan said in a statement.

Adler’s first step in balancing the national budget, she said, would be to cut multi-million dollar subsidies for oil corporations and for businesses operating overseas.

The second step, she said, would be to raise taxes for wealthy Americans to “have millionaires and billionaires pay their fair share of taxes.”

The third component would be to bring down the costs of government programs. For example, she said, “If we bring down health care costs, that can help us reduce spending.”

*Republican
U.S. Rep. Jon
Runyan of the
3rd
Congressional
District.*

The federal government should cut the cost of health care, she said, by negotiating the cost of drugs with pharmaceutical companies and by bundling services for medical procedures. Adler praised the Affordable Care Act, adding that “for the first time this year we’ve had more people

Act, he said, and if he were elected, he would vote to expand health-care coverage. Allowing the sale of medical marijuana in New Jersey, he said, would attract distributors and bring more revenue to the state, bolstering New Jersey's economy.

Frederick John Lavergne, 50, is running as an independent. He said he has the endorsement of the Democratic-Republican Party, and lists himself as a founder of that party.

"I'm running," he said, "because I'm completely dissatisfied with the gridlock in Congress—corruption on both sides of the aisle."

The platform of the Democratic-Republican Party includes ending partisan gridlock by preventing legislators from serving on committees that benefit donors who previously contributed to their political campaigns. It also includes limiting congressional districts to 50,000 constituents and listing Democratic-Republican candidates on the ballot as a major party.

On health care, LaVergne called for repealing and replacing the ACA. He also wants to "widen the aperture of access to Medicaid and Medicare" to include coverage for more people. He said he supports preserving Social Security as it is and would avoid raising the minimum retirement age.

Independent candidate Robert Shapiro, a lawyer from Haddonfield, is running under the slogan "Bob's For Jobs." Shapiro received his law degree from Stanford Law School and has a doctorate in history from Harvard University, according to his campaign website. He did not respond to requests for comment.

Robert Witterschein, 36, of Brick, is running under the banner of "None of Them." He is an accountant and has the endorsement of the Liberty Candidates, which, according to his website, "is in synch with (U.S. Rep. and presidential hopeful) Ron Paul's campaign." He did not return calls for comment.

Christopher G. Dennick, Jr., also of Brick, is running as an independent, and he also did not respond to a request for comment.

New Jersey redrew its congressional districts in 2011. That restructuring divided the district into near-equal parts Democratic and Republican, with the Democrats having a slight registration edge, 27 percent, compared with 25 percent for the GOP, according to May 2012 registration records.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee put the 3rd Congressional District contest on its "Red to Blue" list of targeted races and has spent almost \$12,000 in the district to oppose Runyan.

But Runyan had outspent Adler by about \$400,000 through Sept. 30 and still had almost \$600,000 on hand going into the final month of the campaign. According to the Stockton Polling Institute, Runyan led Adler by 10 percentage points, 49 percent to 39 percent, among likely voters at the beginning of this month.

Annie Knox is a freelance reporter based in Hopewell, N.J.