LEXINGTON Park, Md. - With primary elections underway by mail, some people have already shipped in their ballots. However, turnout before election day has been underwhelming to say the least, with only 18.6% of St. Mary’s County responses having been received by the Board of Elections. That being said, citizens still have time to make informed decisions and to cast their ballot by June 2.

With presumptive presidential bids having already been selected as Donald Trump[R] and Joe Biden[D], congressional candidates are hoping not to be left in the dust in the primaries.

TheBaynet.com had the chance to catch up with all congressional candidates seeking the Republican nomination to challenge the Democrat held seat in Maryland’s 5th District. Each candidate was posed the exact same set of questions and were asked to answer in roughly a paragraph each. These were their responses in the order we received them:

**What is your personal background and how will that help you, if you were to be elected into Congress?**

**Chris Palombi(pictured above):** I was able to experience first hand the lack of transparency and accountability with our elected officials in Congress during my five years working as a United States Capitol Police officer. Life experiences gained as a self-taught web developer and designer, hockey coach, and former teacher have contributed to my ability to be flexible in finding solutions. In a leadership role, I've contributed to the growth and development of others regardless of individual personalities, and abilities, while motivating a group towards a common goal. I very much enjoy sharing different viewpoints and ideas. We live in one of the most diverse districts in the United States. I am comfortable in my ability to bridge the gaps in reaching across the aisle to find solutions while not compromising our rights and freedoms. It's time for a fresh, energetic, and invigorating representation not hampered by special interests and national political aspirations. It would be an honor to represent the people of Maryland’s 5th District in Congress.

**Doug Sayers(pictured above):** As a Veteran with 27 years of honorable service, I will protect and return federal funds into the 5th District military bases at record levels. By protecting our military bases, we maintain jobs and the 5th District’s national significance. We need to upgrade the testing facilities at NSWC Indian Head as the upgraded facility would improve safety, quality, and time as Indian Head Naval Base is at the military’s fore-front of energy research. There are missions in which the Department of Defense needs to stay operational and remain competitive against our near peer enemies. These new missions could be placed at Indian Head Naval Base and at Patuxent Naval Base. As a Senior Military Consultant, I know America’s enemies and areas in the military that need additional military capability. I will collaborate with the Secretary of Defense on these capabilities to utilize our military bases by adding these essential missions. My military knowledge and connections would support these added missions at both military bases through the programming of military resources. By voting for you, me, you are sending a message to the halls of Congress and the Executive branch that the 5th District needs the required Federal funds now! I promise to openly communicate, to build partnerships and rapport, to critically think and problem solve, with the end goal of improving the lives of residents so you can live your best life.

**Bryan DuVal Cubero(pictured above):** I was a U.S. Army Veteran Airborne Paratrooper, Private Security Contractor (retired), College Graduate, Union member, Hispanic-American, Resident of Maryland, born and raised in Washington D.C. and a strict Constitutionalist. I want freedom for all citizens in Maryland and the United States. No exceptions and equal rights and protection for all regardless of race, creed, color or ethnicity. I have common sense, Good Ideas, I will vote the way the voters want me to vote, because I work for them, I'll fight for term limits and I will self impose term limits on myself. I work hard and despise corruption in the government, I don’t go along to get along. I will fight to make the government smaller and more efficient so as to divert tax dollars to worthy/needed projects/programs. As an elected official you will never have to listen to me or do what I say. I will listen and do what you want and vote as you want me to vote on the issues that are important to the voters in the 5th district of Maryland.

**Lee Havis(pictured above):** As young man, I served as an assistant professor in engineering in the Peace Corps in Panama. Later, as founder and direction of a non-profit educational organization, International Montessori Society, I have conducted workshop seminars to teachers all over the world. In addition, my higher education includes a degree in law, as well as international trade. Besides that, I have spent almost my entire adult life as a civic activist for better government in Maryland, and locally in District 5, as a member of the Prince George’s County Republican Central committee for 5 years, and the Republican candidate for Maryland State Senate in Prince George’s County in 2018. So, I think I have a pretty good understanding of the politics and government issues that affect citizens in this District and elsewhere on many levels. In congress, all this background experience, local, national and international, gives me an excellent, broad awareness of the many issues that will require attention to work through and resolve problems in this critical period in our nation’s history.

**Kenneth Lee(pictured above):** After spending twenty years in the Baltimore City Fire Department, I know first-hand the importance of being depended upon and having the ability to access a situation and to make critical decisions at a moment’s notice. I have always been involved with public service and look forward to continuing that public service by representing the people of District 5 as their next representative in Congress.

**What do you believe is the biggest problem that is impacting District 5 at this time and how would you plan to address it on the federal level?**

**Palombi:** A consistent theme I hear from citizens throughout our district is we lack representation, and one not hampered by corporate and special interests. The issues of the average constituent in the 5th District have not been addressed. I will talk and listen to constituents to understand their concerns and also work with the hope of a resolution that benefits the greater good of our district and for our country.

**Sayers:** Our biggest problem is our current representative is a career politician and working for lobbyist groups versus working for us. This is evident by the lack of federal funds from the Department of Transportation for local infrastructure projects, lack of working with Veteran Affairs for VA Center in Southern Maryland, and lack of working with Department of Defense for more missions and funding at Indian Head Naval Base and at Patuxent Naval Base. Our current
representative has been focused on getting votes for impeachment and supporting the left wing liberal progressive agenda (LWLP) in America.

DuVal Cubero: Jobs, good paying jobs that people can get and stay at/with for 20 years and collect a pension that they can live on. Not these restaurant jobs that college grads are working at and probably hate. Traffic is a major issue; an underground transit system would be nice. Everyday people retire and at age 60-65 but can't afford to live on the retirement/pension due to property taxes. I say no property taxes on seniors who own one home. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights are being eroded by state/local and federal government, a bit at a time. People accused/convicted of a misdemeanor in Maryland now lose their Gun Rights. Gun rights are supposed to be for everyone, rich or poor. So that people can defend their life and property if attacked or robbed. On criminal justice reform, most people don't even get a probable cause hearing. If they did, the cases would be dismissed due to lack of evidence. People shouldn't be threatened with a higher crime to force a guilty plea and then conviction to a lower crime. The law must be honored and if no concrete evidence can be shown then the defendant/suspect should be released.

Havis: At the federal level, the main issue for citizens in District 5 are those that affect all American citizens, i.e., a sound, stable economic policy, national security, such as by assuring border security and fighting against illegal immigration, and maximizing individual liberty for all. This requires, in Congress, to oppose the corrupting influence of special partisan interests in government due to lack of proper, honest representation of the citizens in the US Congress. A major plan and approach is to support policies that aim towards these basic goals, such reducing unnecessary regulations over free market activity, gaining independence from China in our essential industry and commerce, and reducing the national debt and unaccountable spending.

Lee: Our district has lacked leadership over the years under Congressman Hoyer. He is unapproachable and unresponsive to many of his constituents. Upon being elected, my office will always be open to my constituents. During my campaign, I have made my personal number available to voters and have taken their calls to discuss my vision for our district, state, and nation.

How do you feel about President Donald Trump and the direction he has taken the country? Do you support seeing him re-elected?

Palombi: Overall, a lot has been accomplished so far in President Trump's first term. Whether you like or dislike President Trump, our country has been doing very well (with exception to the virus crisis). I do support President Trump. When you look at his policies, and what he accomplished during his first term, they have benefited the country across the board. Prior to coronavirus, economic growth was at 4.2% and 4 million more jobs were created, which contributed to less dependency on government programs. Improvements to healthcare access have been made via Right-To-Try legislation and transparency requirements with hospital charges and insurance billing. We saw criminal sentencing reform via the First Step Act. Our NATO allies also are contributing more of their fair share. One thing I hope to see great strides for in the future, that I did not see in the first term so far, is constraining the growth of our national debt.

Sayers: President Trump has worked harder than any recent president to return America to greatest. The President's leadership on strong borders and pre-COVID-19, resulted in a multiple record-level economic metrics growth. During COVID-19, President Trump guided the country through a historical national emergency with effective migration and response efforts with every state in the union in emergency. Our country will be resilient, and President Trump will have my support as the 5th District representative. Together we will continue economic recovery actions and bring record-level economic results. President Trump has delivered on his promises to America and it is my belief that President Trump will be re-elected in 2020.

DuVal Cubero: On the economy, de-regulation and taxes I believe he has done a good job, because the stats on all news channels don't lie and the Department of Labor confirms this. As long as he adheres to the U.S. Constitution and expands our freedoms and rights... I watched the President sign a criminal reform bill that would give people a second chance and the right to expunge their records so that they can get a good job and earn a living. I get it, he has said some things that aren't nice but at the end of the day it appears he wants to expand our freedoms and create good paying jobs, and bring as much manufacturing back to the US as possible.

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Havis: I support and favor the major policies that President Trump has pursued, such as lower taxes, border security against illegal immigration, appointment of strong constitutional judges, standing up to China for their abusive trade practices, opposing terrorism, such as by removing the US from the Iran nuclear deal, and by his efforts to reduce unnecessary regulations that stifle a free market economy. I certainly support the re-election of President Trump.

Lee: I do support Trump's re-election. Consider all the problems we are facing as a nation, I believe he is doing a decent job. I am afraid of the alternative and the direction it will take our country.

On the Second Amendment, what stances resonate most with you and what sort of changes would you like to make towards firearm related issues on the federal level?

Palombi: Every American has the right to protect and defend themselves. The Bill of Rights is the foundation of the greatness of our country and our Right to Bear Arms is essential to protect citizens against threats to their rights and liberties. Gun ownership allows citizens to protect themselves against threats to their rights and liberties. McDonald v. City of Chicago (2010) already ruled and confirmed that the U.S. Constitution guarantees "the right of the people to keep and bear Arms" applies to state and local governments as well. Nationally, many red flag laws are a slippery slope. I understand the intentions but there is a better way. We must follow and allow for due process. Red flag laws can easily be manipulated to restrict good people from their citizen rights. Background checks are only as good as the data put into the system. Unfortunately some have slipped through the cracks and with sufficient crime reporting we can strengthen the integrity of the system. We need to look into maintaining useful data while protecting civil liberties. Conversations need to be encouraged with regards to the correlation of mental health, psychotropic drugs, and violence. We also need to look at the penalties for strong-armed crimes to ensure we reduce recidivism.

Sayers: The Second Amendment is an individual's guaranteed right. The ten amendments are known as the Bill of Rights and were written to restrict government action and protect individual rights of American citizens. I support our 2A rights against left wing liberal progressives (LWLP) that want to update the US Constitution and restrict our 2A rights as written. The current representative is silent to the LWLP agenda and silent on 2A rights. I will be a vocal representative that clearly explains the history of the 2nd Amendment. A firearm does not fire itself; it is the individual that pulls the trigger. I support firearm safety training and background checks. The red-flag laws are a reaction to some bad individuals in America that conducted mass killings and these state level red flag laws are in violation of our 2A rights. As a country, we need to answer how to prevent mass shootings.

DuVal Cubero: Prior to the 1968 Gun Control Act, people only lost their gun rights while incarcerated. The government created the 1968 Gun Control Act to illegally disarm a segment of the population that was openly fighting them for civil rights. Minorities had a Right to openly disobey the local, state and federal governments. They were being systematically oppressed, arrested, over charged/convicted/sentenced and disenfranchised from the American dream. Worse is
when this happens to a majority of a people, in a particular racial group it forces them to live in poor neighborhoods with high crime. Which in turn causes other people of other racial groups to believe those specific minorities are all criminal when this isn't true. This in my opinion proves that government seeks to pit the different racial groups against one another, in order to make sure there is no solidarity among all American when the government decided to slowly take away Gun Rights or any Rights for that matter from a specifically targeted group. Rich people are never going to willingly share power with anyone because there is no advantage in it for them.

I am against it due to the fact it is flawed, why? because it wasn't done for the first 260 years of the US existing. And resident aliens from foreign countries are not always as clean as their record suggest, people do get away with lying on their visa application. Third world countries don't always maintain good criminal records. Which means a person can come here and truly start a new life and fool everyone into thinking their criminal history is spotless. This isn't true for Americans, a US citizen attempting to restart their life in a new city, state, town or even a new country can't. Their arrest/criminal record will follow them wherever they go because the US government will notify the country doing a background check on you while they think about your immigration visa.

Havis: I support the second amendment, that congress shall not infringe on the right of the people to keep and bear firearms. I would therefore oppose any efforts of the national government or congress to restrict ownership and use of firearms by law-abiding American citizens. In fact, this right is important and at times vital to save lives in situations where criminal gun violence is taking place.

Lee: I am a firm supporter of our Second Amendment Rights. I oppose these Red Flag Laws as an attack on our Constitutional Rights and an overreach by government. We need harsher penalties on those who commit violent crimes while protecting one of the most basic, important rights that we have as Americans. We need to stop this agenda of slowing chipping away at our Constitution before our country becomes unrecognizable from what our Founding Fathers created.

Do you feel that in recent years, Maryland and more specifically District 5, have gotten their fair share of federal tax dollars?

Palombi: Due to the close proximity to D.C., Maryland has many federal workers and federal contracts which employ thousands of Marylanders within the 5th District. As a state, Maryland receives the equivalent of $1.53 back in federal money for every $1 that leaves the state via taxes. As for our District, we are fourth out of the eight districts in per capita spending of federal dollars via federal contract and grants awarded on average in the past 5 years. I would agree that we have received our fair share. Our military bases are a major acquisition hub in our district. Given the smart growth and infrastructure we've seen near our bases, they have contributed to establish lifelong communities and a strong economy with a public/private partnership.

Sayers: No, Maryland’s District 5 has been given peanut dust by the current representative. I will secure $480 million dollars in Federal transportation funds for the United States (US) 301 Harry Nice bridge. This project should not be funded using Maryland State funding, as it is a Federal United States 301 highway. This will allow Maryland to reallocate the $480 million dollars in State funds to the Thomas Johnson Bridge project in Calvert and St Mary’s County over the next 1-3 years. We need fresh ideas and term limits in order to avoid career politicians that work for lobbyists and lack coordinating Federal funds for us.

DuVal Cubero: Absolutely not! The Hon. Steny Hoyer has had over 4 decades to make sure the Metro rail comes as far into Maryland as it does in Virginia. In Virginia the Metro goes over 60 miles into that state on just one line, the orange line. If the Blue and Green line came 60 miles into Maryland, well then it is possible most of the traffic problems in Southern Md would be alleviated. It would be easy for people in the tri-county area to visit the capitol and see the sites and visit the museums and also take a higher paying job.

But, the 5th District voters are the people who have to decide, whether they want a Metro rail. If I am elected I'll get it for you if that's what you truly want. One other reason for it would be that it would put less wear and tear on the highway infrastructure here in Southern Maryland. Also it would bring new visitors and customers to the small businesses in the Tri-County area.

Havis: District 5 has many federal government installations, and a large base of federal employment, which makes the level of federal spending very high in this District as compared to most others. On one level, this is a benefit; however, the problem in this dependency on the federal government is also a danger, because it is funded by an unsustainable debt spending, over $23 trillion and growing, which threatens our national security and whole economy as well. In congress, I would work to reduce this outrageous and irresponsible debt spending in a responsible manner, to assure a sound economy for the good of all citizens in this District, as well as for the good of our nation as a whole.

What are your thoughts on social media censorship and how a citizen's personal data is being collected? Do you believe social media sites like Facebook and Twitter should be treated more as publishers or platforms?

Palombi: Mark Zuckerberg testified to Congress last year that Facebook is, “a platform for all ideas.” Unfortunately, social media has been increasingly censoring content, banning and/or demonetizing individuals, and doing so with little accountability, little transparency, and has not shown any consistency to their decisions (other than reasons to believe they are politically motivated). Social media giants, Google and Facebook, share nearly 80% of all referral traffic on the internet. Most Americans under 50 years old get their news from news or social media websites. For Americans under 30, the number one outlet for news is social media. When you have these companies owning so much of the internet traffic, and then having the ability to easily steer public discourse and opinions, via controlled search algorithms (sometimes manually manipulated), displaying news or trends as they choose; censor user published posts and content, or banning those who they don’t agree with, it circumvents our rights to openly discuss and maintain a civil and free society. I do believe with the current social media practices, they should be treated as the same FEC rules as other publishers.

Sayers: Social Media is just the means to exercise our 1st Amendment of Freedom of Speech. The censorship by social media sites need some oversight by the Federal Communications Commission in order to ensure our 1st Amendment rights are protected. Sites are suspending accounts and blocking content from being posted. American citizens should be allowed to use the social media sites freely or individuals can elect to not participate on social media; either way the 1st Amendment rights remain. These are American based social media companies.
DuVal Cubero: My thoughts on social media censorship and how a citizen’s personal data is being collected is that it is wrong but more importantly the voter doesn't like and they don't want it to happen. Because it is unconstitutional and it is a social media platform open to the public. Because it is open to the public you can't discriminate which speech is okay and which isn't okay. Most people I talk to agree they would prefer to never see any speech that is mean or hateful but all speech is protected under Federal Law and in the U.S. Constitution. It is no different than TV. If you don't like it don't look at it, change the page/channel. I am Hispanic, I don't want to be called a racial slur “s**t” it would be unlawful to stop someone for saying it.

Also, data collection to me sounds more like surveillance/intelligence gathering, but to what end.

Havis: There is no secret that major social media sites are biased toward left-wing ideology, which is not consistent with the premise of a true platform. So, I favor the President’s recent executive action to remove the protection of a “platform” designation, to that of publisher. The long-term solution to these problems of privacy, data collection, censorship, and monopoly in the big tech social media world, is competition and choice through other platforms that will inevitably emerge to replace the left-wing, partisan positioning of the current giants in the field.

Lee: I oppose biased censorship of users of social media. It is our right to voice our opinions and I believe as Americans we should not be censored based upon our political stances. Differing opinions and the ability to speak those opinions is what makes America unique from many other nations.

How do you feel about government spending, and more recently on COVID-19? Do you feel like the national debt is something that needs to be addressed soon?

Palombi: The national debt is at more than $25 trillion dollars and climbing. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the Congressional Budget Office projected we will be adding more than $1 Trillion to our annual national debt. Congress has a spending problem, with a repeating cycle of creating debt ceilings, to curb spending, only to increase limits and eventually suspend it entirely. Within the next 10 years, the interest payment alone on the debt is projected to cost taxpayers nearly a quarter of the federal budget. Congress must take ownership of their constitutional duty to maintain the purse of the nation and work within their means before adding any more burden to taxpayers’ wallets. Focus moving forward should be ways to increase our GDP while constraining government spending. In regards to the federal government spending in response to COVID-19; I agree some of the initiatives were needed to assist hospitals, supply PPE, provide small businesses loans, and extend unemployment benefits. We cannot continue to spend (or stimulate) our way out of a crisis; especially when unemployment numbers are high, and many businesses are at risk. There is little revenue to replenish the growing debt, and given our current state of the economy, we cannot afford to raise taxes. Congress must work towards a balanced budget, promote single-item bills, put an end to earmarks and legislation that have no relevance to bills, and be fiscally responsible by finding ways to make government work more efficiently with taxpayers’ money.

Sayers: America is in historic times with a national emergency and with all 50 states in a declaration of emergency. The Federal Legislative Branch should pass stimulus packages by quarter and measure the results of each stimulus package by the Federal Reserve quarterly economic measures. The 50 states must have a balanced budget, so the only variable is the federal debt in this economic recovery effort. The national debt will have to be addressed as the federal debt limit helps the Federal government try to maintain a semi-balanced budget. I support a review of all foreign aid and an opportunity to reduce foreign aid by 5% to help offset the 1st stimulus package.

DuVal Cubero: The over spending has to stop, it isn't the government's money, it is "OUR MONEY," the taxpayers money. They are not supposed to spend one penny without our permission. The money recently spent in relation to the COVID-19 in my opinion was fair and needed, how can you order people to stay home, not go to work and still pay their bills, obviously it isn't possible. No law or executive order by any governor or the president was issued to bar creditors for demanding contractual payments. So it was necessary to pay the money directly to the public but in my opinion it should have only gone to US citizens and resident aliens lawfully working in the US. Who doesn't collect a salary, that is to say the people paid by the hour were the people who needed to be paid COVID-19 funds. If any salaried employees in the US were laid off or fired they too, should have received funds, if you're out of work due to a lockdown you need to eat/live/pay bills. how do you survive without those funds?

As for the national debt, of course our government needs to be forced to tighten spending and live on a budget. But at the same time the US needs to sue the PRC "Peoples Republic of China" for 32 trillion dollars for destroying our economy and wrongful death/negligent homicide/medical malpractice/or worse terrorism. If it was intentionally released, I would hope the World Court would agree that this is a valid case to hear and rule on in our favor.

Havis: Absolutely, the national debt is the critical underlying crisis in federal spending that needs urgent attention. Without correcting the suicidal path of massive, uncontrolled debt spending, we will be facing an economic ruin that will be much worse than the “shut-down” due to the covid-19 pandemic. Looking back, we can see that the economy “shut-down” due to the pandemic didn’t need to occur if the medical professionals were responsible and accountable to facts and true science in the matter. Sadly, we are just now learning that hydroxychloroquine treatment is a virtual cure to all covid-19 patients, and the great majority of deaths have been limited to elderly infirm in nursing homes. Had the focus of government action been focused and limited of this isolated part of the population, with effective treatment and care provided, the normal economic and social life of others could have been safely continued without the brutal “shut-down” conditions imposed around the country.

Lee: Spending has become too massive and reckless. The government needs to be fiscally responsible by finding ways to make government work more efficiently with taxpayers’ money.

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