

Protester considers House run

By: JOHN MULLANE Bucks County Courier Times

Three tour buses from Bucks County arrived at Union Station in Washington, D.C., Saturday morning. The passengers disembarked and eagerly headed through the magnificent white marble and granite building, bound for the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol.

They headed to protest President Obama, his health care plan and federal spending that they say will balloon the national debt by trillions.

Rob Mitchell of Doylestown Township was among them.

"I've never been to a protest march. Never gave it a thought. But here I am," he said.

Mitchell is 43. He lives in the township with his wife and two children. He is part of the "tea party" movement which has (so far) hamstrung the president and the Congress's efforts to pass national health care legislation.

He may be the movement's first candidate for Congress.

"I'm still talking to [Republicans] in Bucks County," he said. So far, [ex-Congressman] Mike Fitzpatrick and [2008 candidate] Tom Manion haven't expressed interest in running. And the Republicans are looking for fresh blood."

Mitchell served 10 years in the Air Force. He is a lawyer who specializes in health care and malpractice. He is the soft-spoken man who, at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia in August, created a sensation when he asked Sen. Arlen Specter about Congress' competence to "re-engineer" the health care system, when so many members admitted they had not read the proposed 1,000-page health care bill.

Specter's infamous reply - that there are so many bills "we have to make judgments very fast" - caused the crowd to explode in boos and jeers. To date, the video of the exchange between the two has gotten nearly 1 million views on YouTube.

"A year ago, I was just focused on my family and trying to start a small business with my wife in Doylestown. I was trying to get together a business plan. I was involved with a few groups - the Doylestown Business and Community Alliance. The parents club with the Lenape football team. Running for office? No."

While his decision isn't final, he expects to file with the Federal Election Commission next month, signaling serious intent to run in the 8th District against incumbent Democrat Patrick Murphy.

"We need to define Patrick Murphy by his actions, not his words," Mitchell said. "He always says he's a [fiscally conservative] 'Blue Dog' Democrat. It's insulting because there is little or nothing in his record to back that up."

Mitchell, his wife and kids find a spot on the west lawn of the Capitol. The speeches are brief, lively and anti-Obamacare. The event has the feel of an outdoor rock concert. The music is catchy. Beach balls are tossed around. Mitchell grabs one and throws it.

"My big issue is government spending," he said. "The people in that building" - he points to the Capitol dome - "have mortgaged the country on the backs of American children. The president's health care plan is now marketed as a moral crusade. To me, it's a moral issue when we make our kids servants to government debt. The federal government is making trillions of dollars of promises to us that it simply cannot honor. Rationing will come and the bill makes clear a bureaucracy will decide what kind of medical care you get."

A speaker on the stage talks of "the new revolution." Nearby, a man waves a hand-made sign: "When the people fear their government, it's tyranny. When government fears the people, it's liberty."

Mitchell said most of the protesters are like him: never been to a march in Washington; never carried a protest sign.

"Barack Obama has tried to yank the country hard to the left. This is the reaction," he said. "We're pushing back."

September 15, 2009