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Ark. AG candidates spar on illegal immigration, payday lending

CONWAY, Ark. The three candidates for Arkansas attorney general faced off in their first debate today, and illegal immigration, payday lending and consumer protection were among the hot topics.

Republican nominee Gunner DeLay, Democrat nominee Dustin McDaniel and Green nominee Rebekah Kennedy participated in the debate, which was taped during the day and televised tonight on the Arkansas Education Television Network. Journalist Steve Barnes served as moderator.

In an opening statement, DeLay said he represents beliefs held by most Arkansans, including a traditional definition of marriage, the right to bear arms and the sanctity of human life.

McDaniel touted his experience as a police officer and state lawmaker.

Kennedy pointed out differences between the Green Party and the Republicans and Democrats, noting that "The Green Party believes in equal justice, fair taxes, unions and health care for all Arkansans."

When asked what the state's role is in immigration enforcement, Kennedy said it's the federal government's job to reform its policies to better reflect the reality of immigration in the United States.

DeLay said the state needs to take more action in enforcing immigration laws _ by using the Medicaid fraud unit to target employers that knowingly or negligently hire illegal immigrants, for example.

McDaniel said that, if elected as attorney general, he would work with other attorneys general to lobby the federal government for more federal enforcement agents in the states.

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