

The Gazette

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Liz Mathis wins Iowa Senate District 18



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James Q. Lynch

James Lynch covers politics and state government. For nearly 30 years, he's covered pork queen contests, papal visits and presidential [...]

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UPDATED: 31 October 2011 | 8:30 pm in Elections, Local News

Senate 18 candidates oppose raising fuel tax

Golding and Mathis commented during a question-and-answer session with The Gazette Editorial Board on Monday

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Cindy Golding (left) and Liz Mathis, candidates for state Senate District 18, talk before a debate hosted by KCRG and The Gazette at the Linn-Mar High School Auditorium on Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2011, in Marion. (Liz Martin/SourceMedia Group News)

CEDAR RAPIDS — Candidates in a Nov. 8 special election in a Linn County Iowa Senate district oppose a gas tax increase that a citizen advisory panel calls necessary to raise between \$184 million and \$320 million annually for critical transportation needs.

Middle-class families shouldn't have to carry the burden of an increase in the gas tax, which is an issue that has been kicked around for years, Democrat Liz Mathis said

"So clearly this is contentious," she said when asked about the proposal by the Governor's Transportation 2020 Citizen Advisory Commission to increase fuel taxes 8 to 10 cents per gallon. "Is this the right time and place for working families? No. I think the cost of living is high enough. To add that on right now,

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we just shouldn't do it."

Republican [Cindy Golding](#), would oppose the increase next year and said she would continue to do so until she was satisfied that all other options had been considered. She wants to know transportation funds are being spent on the highest priorities and not on programs like planting wildflowers.

"They are wonderful programs ... but should we fund those things when we don't have funds for critical needs?" Golding asked. "When you are in a situation where you have an economic downturn, you need to be using a critical eye for all programs and make sure the funds are being used on critical needs."

Golding and Mathis, who are running to fill a vacant seat in Iowa Senate 18, made their comments during an hourlong question-and-answer session with The Gazette Editorial Board on Monday. The winner will replace Marion Democrat Swati Dandekar, who resigned to accept a position on the [Iowa Utilities Board](#).

Senate 18 includes parts of Marion and Walford as well as Fairfax, Palo, Hiawatha, Robins, Alburnett, Center Point, Walker, Central City, Coggon and Prairieburg.

Iowa now gets \$1.2 billion in yearly transportation money through the state's road-use tax fund, which annually takes in \$470 million from various vehicle-related fees and \$430 million from fuel taxes. Those are now set at 21 cents a gallon on sales of unleaded gasoline, 19 cents per gallon for ethanol-blended fuels and 22.5 cents a gallon for diesel, according to data from the [Iowa Department of Transportation](#). Iowa's gas tax was last raised in 1989 and now ranks in the bottom third among states nationally, department officials noted.

The department projects that each penny increase in the state fuel tax would raise \$22 million, and a 1 percentage point increase in vehicle registration fees would raise \$50 million in additional revenue.

Mathis suggested that before raising the gas tax, the Legislature might change the way the funds are distributed so cities that have heavier traffic volumes receive more than counties with low traffic counts. She also recommended looking at registration fees for new vehicles and trailers as well as taxing hybrid vehicles — ideas included in the advisory panel's recommendations.

Golding suggested making spending cuts to find funding to cover critical needs.

"Just like at home, when you have unexpected budget expense, you have to cut someplace else," Golding said. "If it is still necessary, is 8 to 10 cents necessary? Or could we do it with 4 cents?"

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Senate 18 candidates oppose raising fuel tax



Jim Cabbage said:

On November 1, 2011

Of course politicians are going to say they're against raising taxes & in this case, they're both wrong. Iowa is in the bottom 1/3 of road use taxes collected & it shows. The condition of our highways is pathetic. The fact



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neither of these two is willing to raise revenue needed to maintain our highways is reason enough for me not to vote for either of them.

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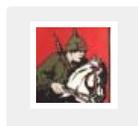


Jeff Moser said:

On November 1, 2011

I agree Jim....but they have no problem throwing more money at education...that raises property taxes...raising the fuel tax is the fairest tax....and I wouldn't be surprised if a study was done that a very large portion of our fuel tax income was pay by out of state truckers crossing Iowa on interstate 80/35....millions of trucks cross every year...and they all wait to get to Iowa to fuel because fuel in Iowa is in some cases 20cents cheaper....another example is McGregor Iowa....you have to wait to get gas at the convinience store there because of all the people from Wisconsin coming over for gas...

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Jeff Klinzman said:

On November 1, 2011

“(Cindy Golding) wants to know transportation funds are being spent on the highest priorities and not on programs like planting wildflowers.”

And here we see the result of straining at budget gnats. I'm not going to look up the cost of “planting wildflowers.” I simply want to note that Golding uses a typical “conservative” budget tactic: take one budget line out of context and make it seem absurd.

Ms. Golding, I'll defend “planting wildflowers.” I can't see how that costs too much to afford, unless you come up with a number. We need plants growing along right-of-ways to improve drainage and control erosion. And, I know you business types only see aesthetic value in the colors black and green, but I think wildflowers gorwing along the roadside makes the state more attractive.

I agree with both of my colleagues above: both candidates are wrong to oppose raising the gas tax. Good roadways are a necessity for commerce. I will at least given Mathis credit for not wanting to see taxes raised which will affect middle- and low-income people. That Golding doesn't even mention the effect of raising that tax on people, and the fact that she takes the pinch-penny resentnik approach to budgeting, speaks volumes about her priorities, which I respectfully suggest are completely screwed up.

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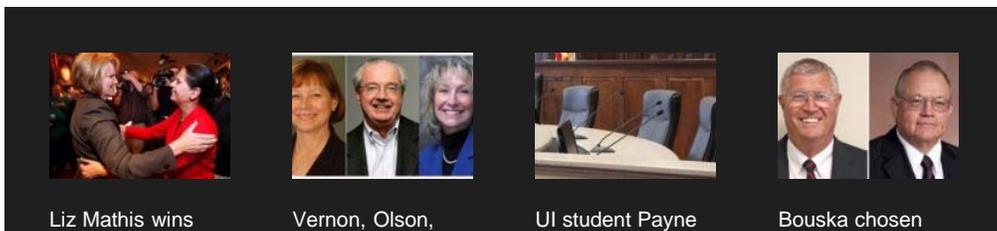
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District 18

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to join, Hayek
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Ruth Moody
Band
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+ Ra Ra Riot +
The
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@Blue Moose Tap
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David Allen
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November 25,
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@First Avenue
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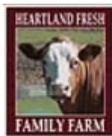
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