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Stearns and Bruderly differ on war, immigration

By NATHAN CRABBE

Sun staff writer

Cliff Stearns

- Age: 65
 - Occupation: U.S. Representative
 - Home: Ocala
 - Family: Wife, Joan Stearns, three children n
- Running for: U.S. House of Representatives,
Florida 6th Congressional District
- Salary: \$165,200
 - Political experience: Nine terms in U.S. Congress
 - Community involvement: Past President, Kiwanis; Past Board of Directors, Boys & Girls Club; Past Board of Directors, Munroe Regional Hospital
 - Vote for me because: "I have put together a strong record of accomplishments for the people of Alachua County. I provide an independent voice that serves the diverse interests of the county. I do not flinch from bucking my party leadership and the president by opposing NAFTA, Trade Promotion Authority and congressional pay raises."

David Bruderly

- Age: 59
- Occupation: Professional engineer
- Home: Gainesville
- Family: Divorced, two children, four grandchildren
- Salary: \$165,200
- Political experience: Ran for Congress in 2002 and 2004
- Community involvement: Past organizational involvement includes Florida

Engineering Society and Sierra Club

- Vote for me because: "I can provide new leadership, new ideas and new energy to chart a new direction for our great nation. It is no longer good enough to have a congressman who just rubber stamps the Bush administration's failed policies for Iraq, national security, immigration and spending priorities."

U.S. Rep Cliff Stearns has all the advantages in the campaign to represent Florida's 6th Congressional district.

The Ocala Republican is running for his 10th term. He's facing the same Democratic challenger, Gainesville engineer Dave Bruderly, whom he handily beat twice before. He has \$2.3 million more cash in his campaign coffers than his opponent.

But Bruderly said he believes one major factor will help him garner increased support. The deteriorating situation in Iraq has vindicated his position as a war opponent, he said, while exposing the flaws in Stearns' support for the Bush administration.

"I was right in 2002 and I'm right today," he said. "Stearns was wrong in 2002 and he's still wrong."

The 6th district includes parts of Alachua, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Lake, Levy, Marion and Gilchrist counties. Stearns beat Bruderly by a 2-to-1 margin in the past two elections.

Stearns acknowledged mistakes have been made in the war effort, but points to democratic elections in Iraq as a major success. It would be a mistake to set a timetable to remove troops, he said.

"We have to be very careful to stay the course and allow maximum opportunity for the Iraqi people," he said.

Stearns and other Republicans were able to achieve several legislative victories recently. He helped pass a bill establishing military commissions to try terrorism suspects and another to build hundreds of miles of fencing along the Mexican border.

The terrorism bill prohibits inhumane treatment of detainees, but gives the president power to interpret international treaties preventing torture. Stearns said he opposes the use of torture and believes the bill provides adequate safeguards without going too far.

"Some people say putting a prisoner in a cold cell is torture ... but we've had cases where that sort of inconvenience has garnered valuable intelligence for us," he said.

Bruderly said he believes the use of torture has made American troops less safe. He views the issue as part of a larger problem in the Bush administration's approach to Iraq, which he says values force over diplomacy.

"You cannot, you will not have peace in the Middle East until you have an administration that's willing to use diplomacy," he said.

Stearns and Bruderly also differ on their approach to immigration. Stearns said he supports increasing border security and building facilities to hold illegal immigrants, and opposes any program providing amnesty to illegal workers.

"If we can't control our borders, we cannot control our future," he said.

Bruderly said the border fence is a "billion-dollar boondoggle." Agriculture and construction rely on immigrant labor and treating those workers as criminals is not a real solution, he said.

Stearns points to his experience in Congress as another reason he deserves support. Being a senior member of the majority party allows him to bring money to local projects at the Gainesville Regional Airport and Veterans Affairs Medical Center, he said.

Bruderly said he believes it is time for a change in Congress. Stearns and other Republicans should be held accountable for the situation in Iraq and other problems that have happened on their watch, he said.

"He's helped create this mess," he said.

CANDIDATE Q&A David Bruderly

No. The invasion and occupation of Iraq have helped terrorist leaders' recruiting efforts and diverted resources from pursuing terrorists like bin Laden, addressing terrorism at its roots and protecting our ports and cities.

Cliff Stearns

For years prior to 9-11, Iraq was listed as a sponsor of terrorism. Gone is the regime that supported terrorists and provided them sanctuary, replaced by a government fighting terrorism.

David Bruderly

The U.S. military should leave Iraq completely by a specific date and be replaced by a multinational peacekeeping force accompanied by a multinational effort to rebuild Iraq.

Cliff Stearns

The U.S. role in Iraq is to empower the Iraqi government, but ultimately only Iraqis can defeat the insurgents. Our military should remain until the job is finished.

David Bruderly

Torture is illegal. Not only has it proved ineffective and the results untrustworthy, but more important, it degrades us and weakens our fundamental respect for law.

Cliff Sterns

I am opposed to torture.**David Bruderly**

A program should allow U.S. businesses to find employees, protect workers from exploitation, provide a safe method for workers to enter the U.S. and return to their home countries, and control our borders.

Cliff Sterns

I oppose the program, which essentially is amnesty. It rewards those here illegally, allowing them to skip ahead of those waiting 10 to 20 years to enter legally.

David Bruderly

Immediate actions should be taken to promote conservation and efficiency. Increasing CAF f standards and using renewable energy sources, such as solar energy and biomass can reduce greenhouse gases.

Cliff Sterns

The Energy Policy Act of 2005, which I helped write and enact, includes provisions promoting the development and deployment of technologies reducing greenhouse gas intensity, along with promoting alternative fuels.

U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns has all the advantages in the campaign to represent Florida's 6th Congressional district.
