

Miller-Meeks running for Congress

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Body

The campaign trail is nothing new for her.

Mariannette Miller-Meeks, an eye doctor and a former director of the Iowa Department of Public Health, is seeking Iowa's 2nd Congressional District seat as a Republican for the third time. She previously ran against Rep. Dave Loebsack, D-Iowa, in 2008 and 2010.

She spoke at the Iowa City Cancer Treatment Center on Wednesday, which was on the first day of a tour to announce her candidacy.

"I think what's most important is that people try," Miller-Meeks said. "So, if you are not pleased where the government has gone, and you think there's a mess in Washington, D.C., and things have gotten worse since the last time you ran or you tried, then I think you have an obligation and responsibility to try to change that. The worst thing is not trying."

Miller-Meeks resigned from her post at the Public Health Department to run for office. She is running largely in response to her negative feelings about the Affordable Care Act.

"Looking at the Affordable Care Act, there are ways we can change it, modify it, and/or, if possible, repeal it, but you have to gain the Senate, but at least, let's make it work for people," Miller-Meeks said.

She also described Washington as a "dysfunctional mess" and said the government needs more accountability.

Tim Hagle, a University of Iowa political science associate professor, noted two major differences in the 2014 race compared with the 2010 campaign: first, the heightened presence of the Affordable Care Act in the news. Hagle said Miller-Meeks could use her experience running the Public Health Department to her advantage, a post she held following the 2010 election until January.

Second, Iowa's second district lost Democrat-leaning Linn County and gained Republican-leaning Scott County in the 2012 election following redistricting.

Before Miller-Meeks can compete directly with Loebsack, she must defeat Rep. Mark Lofgren, R-Muscatine, in June's Republican primary.

Hagle said Miller-Meeks will "initially have to explain why she's the better competitor to be the Republican nominee" given the results of her previous two campaigns.

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Miller-Meeks said the primary race is "very beneficial" for her campaign.

"The good thing about primaries is that it really helps you for the general election," she said. "You have to get your county support in line. You have to get it arranged. You have to get those people who are going to help you reach out to door-knock. It really helps to fine-tune the issues and the solutions you have to those issues."

Hagle said Lofgren has not had much traction so far in the race, and his newfound competition could give him more attention.

The Daily Iowan was unable to reach Lofgren by time of publication.

The Loeb sack campaign is not concerned about Miller-Meeks' entry into the race.

"[Her] tea-party views will play well with extreme members of her party," said Nick Clarksen, Loeb sack campaign political director. He said members of the 2nd District will "realize how reckless she is."

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