

# Health care on top of Miller-Meeks' list as she takes

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## Body

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Dr. Mariannette Miller-Meeks was standing outside Senator Grassley's office in Washington D.C. with several other doctors. She said she felt there would be no action on Medicare disparity after meeting with Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-Mount Vernon.) It was at that point that she said she might run for Congress. She decided to run as a Republican.

"Most people in their mid-life crisis buy a convertible - I'm running for Congress," she said.

Miller-Meeks is not so much in a personal crisis as much as she sees a crisis in Washington. She said she doesn't think people want career politicians representing them in Congress. Like Loebsack, she hasn't had political experience prior to this run. She was elected as president of the Iowa Medical Society, which gives her one more elected office than Loebsack had held when he ran for Congress two years ago.

Being a doctor, Miller-Meeks has a big interest in health care. In fact, on Monday she performed surgery in the morning before hitting the campaign trail. She said changes need to be made in the single payer health care system that has continually decreased payment to providers and hospitals to control costs and ultimately ration care and limit innovation and technology.

Another large entitlement program that could use some help is Social Security, Miller-Meeks said. There are some simple solutions that can extend the life of the program. She said simply by tying the cost of living increases to a recipient's birthday a lot of money will be saved. As the system works now, if someone starts Social Security in December they will get a cost of living increase the following month because everyone gets one Jan. 1. By tying it to a person's birthday, those people wouldn't get the increase until they were in the system for a year.

She also sees that it is difficult for congressmen to keep their hands off Social Security funds when money is needed elsewhere. For that reason, she supports some sort of private, but limited, account for some of the funds. She said the private account most likely could earn better than the 3 percent the government gains.

Miller-Meeks isn't just concentrating on Medicare and Social Security, however. She also would like to see the U.S. generate an energy policy, something she said has been lacking in the last 30 years.

She said the Iowa Second District has a good start in alternative energy. The Siemens plant in Fort Madison and a wind plant in Cedar Rapids are taking advantage of wind power. Of course Keokuk has had the hydroelectric plant for many years and we have biodiesel and ethanol plants as well. She said the state could use nuclear power too.

The state also is becoming a leader in biotechnology, creating items like Asoya, oil from soybeans and working on oil from algae. Even the state's garbage can help provide energy. Several waste authorities are looking at methane collecting from their landfills.

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The government can push these technologies along by creating programs to help perpetuate them or by removing some restraint.

Something on everyone's mind right now is gasoline prices. Miller-Meeks said the alternative energies won't help gas prices right away. But at some point it will. What else needs to happen is to strengthen the dollar against other currencies.

"We need to admit that lower interest rates and our housing policy put people with shaky credit into homes they couldn't afford," she said. "We should help those who were misled."

She said the lending companies may have to face the loss. She would like to see the Federal Reserve stop lowering interest rates and perhaps even increase them slightly.

People are becoming distrustful of loans, Miller-Meeks said, and that is not good for business.

Another economic issue is the corporate tax. The U.S. has the second highest rate in the world. Miller-Meeks said lowering that to 20 percent would help the economy. The lost money from lowering the tax would be made up through more production and more people working and paying taxes.

She would like to change the income tax system too. She would like people to have the opportunity to choose a flat tax. It would cut down on paperwork and headaches from the large, complex tax code Americans face.

The Iraq war is a concern too. She said the troop surge of last year has helped reduce the number of attacks. She sees keeping a small amount of troops in the country as a drawdown begins, similar to troops we have in many countries around the globe. She said she doesn't know how many years a drawdown will take.

When asked about the \$1 billion embassy being built in Iraq, she said that like anything else, she'll ask how it benefits the citizens of the U.S. and try to find out answers.

On the personal side, Miller-Meeks lives in Ottumwa and she is married with two children: one in college and one in high school. She and her husband have both served in the military. She retired from the Reserves as a Lt. Colonel in 1998.

She is facing two opponents in the June 3 primary for the congressional seat. Lee Harder of Hillsboro and Peter Teahan of Cedar Rapids also are on the ballot.

Miller-Meeks will be back in the area on May 17 for several events in the Keokuk, Fort Madison and Burlington areas.

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