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Will Stockton host a governor's debate?

NICHOLAS HUBA Staff Writer Mar 25, 2017

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — Stockton University hopes the race for the state's highest political office passes through its campus.

Stockton has applied to the state's Election Law Enforcement Commission to host a gubernatorial primary debate. The commission is expected to select a host for the debate during its meeting Tuesday in Trenton. Ocean County College in Toms River and NJTV also have applied to host the debate. According to the commission, the debate must occur between April 13 and May 23.

"We put in for this four years ago," said Sharon Schulman, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton. "This has always been a part of the Hughes Center mission."

In the past, the school has hosted legislative, congressional and senatorial debates. Most recently, the Hughes Center sponsored a District 2 legislative debate with Republican Assemblyman Chris Brown and running mate Will Pauls and Democratic Assemblyman Vince Mazzeo and running mate Colin Bell.

"Sponsoring a primary debate here would provide residents with an exceptional opportunity to assess the candidates first-hand," said Harvey Kesselman, president of Stockton.

Jeff Brindle, executive director of ELEC, said the agency considers a variety of factors before selecting a venue.

"How many counties and households it reaches is very important," Brindle said, adding the commission wants as many people to experience the debate as possible.

According to Stockton's application, if awarded, the debate would be held from 7 to 8 p.m. May 9 at the school's Center Theater. If Stockton is selected, the debate will be live-streamed on Facebook, and 200 tickets will be made available.

"We are allowing people to communicate with people that they serve," Schulman said. "We act as a conduit."

The Hughes Center is no stranger to applying to host debates.

In 2011, Stockton put in to host a 2012 presidential debate. The nonpartisan Commission on Presidential Debates selected other schools to host the three presidential debates and one vice presidential debate.

They were the University of Denver in Colorado; Centre College in Danville, Kentucky; Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York; and Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida.

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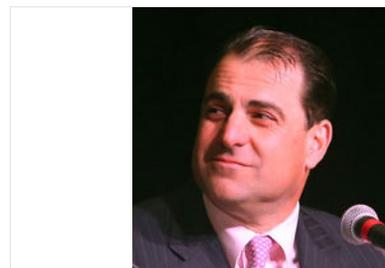
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