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The six candidates in the 22nd Congressional District race explained their positions at a Monday forum at the Santa Barbara Public Library. At left are Libertarian David Bersohn and Democrat Walter Capps.

Capps, Seastrand air differences at forum

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By CHUCK SCHULTZ
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Monday's 22nd Congressional District candidates forum gave Rep. Andrea Seastrand, R-Shell Beach, a chance to boast about helping pass a welfare reform bill. Democratic challenger Walter Capps blasted her campaign ads against him.

Capps, a UCSB religious studies professor, provided drama at the close of the two-hour forum when he quoted from a Seastrand television commercial that says: "When Polly Klaas' killer got the death penalty, two people were disappointed: Richard Allen Davis, the murderer, and Walter Capps."

"Now I want Andrea Seastrand to know that I was not disappointed. Andrea Seastrand knows this isn't true. But this is what happens in politics... I am there to offer an alternative," Capps said, drawing loud applause from an overflow audience of about 300 people who listened to all six congressional candidates at the Santa Barbara Public Library.

Capps also vowed, if elected, to rework the recently enacted welfare reform measure, touted by Seastrand, which, among other things, cuts benefits to legal immigrants.

Disputing a Seastrand campaign portraying him as favoring illegal immigration, Capps said: "I'm opposed to illegal immigration... but I don't want

children in the streets and I don't want legal immigration thrashed."

Conversely, Seastrand said she was proud of what the Republican-controlled Congress had accomplished during her first term, noting it approved legislation to balance the budget, reduce the federal deficit and devised a plan to help keep Medicare solvent.



"We applied some good old working sense to the federal government, which was too big and too out-of-touch with American families," Seastrand remarked.

In response to a question from the audience, both said they do not favor legalizing drugs. They differed sharply on how the problem of drug abuse should be addressed, however.

"You need the National Guard and tough penalties" to counteract drug dealers, Seastrand suggested.

"The answer to the drug problem," Capps said, "is create positive motivation and stimulation so young people have a better alternative" than using drugs.

A more radical reply came from Libertarian Party candidate David Bersohn.

"Drugs are a personal medical problem," he said. "They become a social problem when they're outlawed."

Steve Wheeler, the Independent Party candidate, said "putting troops at the border is the best way to get the military involved in the drug trade." He suggested instead that a national commission be formed to study the possibility of legalizing drugs.

Capps and Seastrand also differed sharply on whether she had voted last year to cut funding for Medicare. He said she backed legislation that slashed \$245 million from that medical insurance program for seniors.

"I have voted to increase Medicare, not to decrease it," Seastrand countered.

The forum was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the News-Press.

This is the second time Capps and Seastrand have battled each other for the congressional seat. When she was elected in 1994, she beat him by only about 1,600 votes.

Seastrand predicted that restructuring federal tax laws will be a high priority of Congress during the next two years.

"We have a chance to change the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) as you know it and possibly even eliminate it," she added.

"We should eliminate Congress before we eliminate the IRS," Wheeler responded. "We need to end corporate welfare."

Capps, referring to Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole's proposal for cutting taxes, said: "When you hear talk about a 15 percent across-the-board tax cut, you know you're in an election year."

Also in the race are Dick Porter of the Reform Party and Dawn Tomastik of the Natural Law Party.

Sierra Club right in Seastrand attack

TO THE EDITOR: OCT. - 5 1996

There are a lot of important issues in the 1996 campaign. I do not believe, however, that there is one issue more crucial to the 22nd Congressional District than the environment. Our district is perhaps one of the most environmentally sensitive in the country.

We cannot have a healthy economy in San Luis Obispo or Santa Barbara without a healthy environment! This is something Congresswoman Andrea Seastrand does not seem to understand.

As a member of the Sierra Club, I am so proud to see my organization take a stand and expose Ms. Seastrand's dreadful environmental voting record for what it is — payback to the polluting corporations who fund her campaign effort!

Keep up the good work, Sierra Club! We need Walter Capps to represent us in Washington!

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San Luis Obispo