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Locals tackle issues

PBS to televise public forum

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Saturday was a truly democratic day at Piedmont Virginia Community College, when more than 100 area residents selected the most important questions facing the country, then presented them to people who matter.

After an all-day dialogue in small groups, people from Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Orange and Nelson fired questions on hot-button issues such as Iraq and the economy to four people: Lt. Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, Attorney General Jerry W. Kilgore, Nathaniel Howell, a University of Virginia professor and former ambassador to Kuwait, and Ming-Jer Chen, a professor at UVa's Darden Graduate School of Business Administration.



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Former ambassador Nathaniel Howell (from left), Attorney General Jerry W. Kilgore, Darden School professor Ming-Jer Chen, Lt. Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, and host May-Lily Lee listen to a question from the audience during the panel discussion of PBS' Deliberation Day event at Piedmont Virginia Community College.

Part of PBS Deliberation Day, which also took place at 16 locations around the country, the afternoon question-and-answer session was filmed and will be part of shows to air nationally and locally on Tuesday and on Oct. 28 and 30.

The session took on an increasingly partisan quality as Kaine and Kilgore, the presumptive Democratic and Republican nominees for Virginia governor in 2005, offered starkly different responses to questions similar to those seen in recent presidential debates.

What's Next

"Time to Choose: A By the People Election Special" will air on PBS at 8 p.m. Tuesday. "What's at Stake? A Virginia Currents Election Special" will focus on Deliberation Day in Charlottesville and will air at 8 p.m. Oct. 28 and at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 30.

Kilgore, on more than one occasion, took the opportunity to either tout President Bush's record or discredit the Democratic candidate, Sen. John F. Kerry, and his running mate, Sen. John Edwards.

Responding to a question about the USA Patriot Act, Kilgore said, "In this war on terrorism, it's about information sharing. ... In this war on terrorism, we have to be right 100 percent of the time. I applaud the president, the Senate and the House for passing it."

The evocations did not resonate with most of the Deliberation Day participants in the audience, who loudly booed some of Kilgore's answers and clapped at Kaine's.

Kaine said he was concerned about how the legislation prohibits access to a lawyer in certain cases.

Another contentious topic was building alliances abroad. "I think we've done some real harm to our alliances," Kaine said.

Kilgore thought otherwise. He said, "If we have to go it alone in the future, then we have to go it alone."

Asked about the United States' ability to gather intelligence, Howell said, "I think the answer to your question is you're never going to have all the intelligence."

The panelists basically agreed, however, in their answers to when U.S. troops should return from Iraq: They said the job needs to be finished first.

Chen, a leading business strategy scholar, said the country needs "to reconnect to the rest of the world" and "restore broken trust."

When Chen asked the audience members to raise their hand if they thought the economy was on the right track, few did. He lamented the "either-or syndrome," a growing problem he said has led to the viewpoint of "us versus them, and the U.S. versus the rest of the world."

As a result, Americans overlook issues and economic realities, such as the fact that the U.S. borrows \$1.5 billion daily, Chen said. He also asked the audience, rhetorically, if it's sensible to blame the federal

government for the budget deficit, given the remarkable debt faced by the average American.

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