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Title: Republican Senate candidates to gather at televised debate

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Tickets are required for free event at Furman University

By Dan Hoover

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The six candidates seeking the Republican Party's U.S. Senate nomination will appear in a televised debate April 7 at Furman University.

It will begin at 7 p.m. in McAlister Auditorium and will be aired by Spartanburg's WSPA-TV, WLTX of Columbia, WBTW of Florence/Myrtle Beach and WCBD of Charleston, Furman officials said.

Sponsoring the debate are WSPA-TV, Furman's Richard W. **Riley Institute** of Government, Politics and Public Leadership, and the campus chapter of College Republicans.

The debate is open to the public free of charge, but tickets are required.

The GOP candidates are former Gov. David Beasley of Society Hill, former Attorney General Charlie Condon of Sullivans Island, Bluffton businesswoman Orly Benny Davis, U.S. Rep. Jim DeMint of Greenville, Myrtle Beach Mayor Mark McBride and Charleston developer Thomas Ravenel.

Two Democrats are seeking the seat being vacated by longtime Democrat Ernest F. Hollings: state Education Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum and party activist Marcus Belk of Camden.

Primaries for each party's nomination will be held June 8. A GOP runoff, if necessary, will be two weeks later, on June 22.

Also, Monday, Beasley said he had signed the Americans for Tax Reform's "Taxpayer Protection Pledge" which commits signers to oppose tax increases.

In signing, Beasley joined four of the other candidates, Condon, DeMint, McBride and Ravenel. Davis could not be reached for comment.

Beasley said he signed the pledge to underscore his commitment to tax relief at the federal level. "It is imperative for Congress to make President Bush's tax cuts permanent and to stop wasteful spending in Washington," Beasley said.

As governor, Beasley pushed property tax rollback legislation through the General Assembly.

DeMint and Ravenel had previously signed the pledge.

Ravenel spokesman Mike Green said, "Beasley's got to do those things now because he hasn't done them in the past."

Terry Sullivan, DeMint's campaign manager, said DeMint had recently received the tax reform organization's "Hero of the Taxpayer Award" and has a 100 percent lifetime congressional voting rating from ATR.

Beasley's announcement, Sullivan said, "is a good example of Beasley trying to make something out of nothing."

'Dan Hoover covers politics and can be reached at 298-4883.

WANT TO GO?

Contact the **Riley Institute** at Furman University, 294-3251 or e-mail carol.asalon@furman.edu to reserve tickets.

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