



STEINER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

gun show, they say, 'I hate Democrats ... wait, why are you even here?' And then we can have a conversation.

"We don't agree on every aspect of gun policy, because I'm a big fan of background checks, red flag laws and recording transactions, while they usually have a more laissez-faire approach. But they have a lot of respect for veterans, understand that I believe in gun control the way it's handled in the military, and we can start from a place that we both believe in gun ownership."

Fire and water

Steiner said the two main planks in his platform ("other than democracy," he interjected) are fire suppression and North State water issues. He agrees with the incumbent on expanding water infrastructure, namely building Sites Reservoir and raising Shasta Dam. Also like LaMalfa, he calls for better forest management.

"The core concept I want to get across is we as Californians have hugged our forests to death," he said. "The pendulum has swung from clear-cutting to no cutting. We need to find more balance through sustainable forest management. That's going to mean cutting down a lot of trees. We want to get as much value as we can from that, and we want fire to stay low to the ground and out of canopy."

Steiner also believes that firefighters should be organized more like the military, in that they should be paid good salaries with benefits and on a 20- to 25-year

Steiner, a moderate Democrat and Iraq War vet, is hoping to flip conservatives who might be dissatisfied with Republican Congressman Doug LaMalfa.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MAX STEINER

retirement track, as opposed to hourly wages and income dependent on the severity of the fire season. Time not spent battling blazes would be devoted to other management efforts.

Though he and LaMalfa may share some goals, Steiner said the differences are clear. For one, Steiner believes both of these issues are rooted in climate change.

"I think it's crazy my opponent doesn't believe it's caused by man," he said.

"Well, I'm sorry Doug, maybe you should drag your head out of the ground. I think it's an embarrassment for the district and really detrimental to our interests."

"He's unnecessarily antagonistic," Steiner added. "No matter who you are, to be effective, you have to build bridges."

For all his talk of building bridges and earnest efforts to find solid, middle ground, Steiner said some people are just too far out of reach.

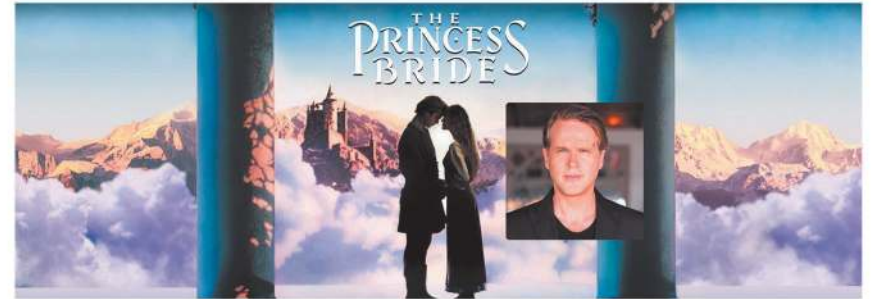
"The roughest part of running for Congress is realizing there really are 30 to 40 percent of Americans who believe some things that just aren't true, who are very vulnerable to propaganda and who are willing to accept things based on what they want to believe is real rather than search out facts that are real."

"It's impossible, honestly, to debate with someone who refuses to accept reality in the same way you do." □

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