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VOTERS DESERVE A TRANSPARENT DEBATE: INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE MICHAEL BRIDGFORD CALLS FOR TRADITIONAL IOWA PBS CANDIDATE FORUM

DAVENPORT, IA —September 3, 2026 — IA-01 candidates are being called upon to preserve one of the state's most vital political traditions: a direct, unscripted candidate debate ahead of November's general election.

In a formal open letter issued to Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks and Professor Christina Bohannon, Independent candidate Michael Bridgford highlighted the fundamental right of IA-01 voters to hear directly from every candidate seeking to represent them in Congress. Iowa PBS has extended official invitations to the general election debate, establishing fair, non-partisan criteria for candidate participation. While Bridgford has officially accepted, the public remains waiting for answers from the remaining candidates.

For generations, Iowans have relied on face-to-face, neutral debates to cut through millions of dollars in out-of-state television attack ads and special interest noise. Side-by-side public debates provide voters with the transparent, in-depth evaluation required to make an informed decision at the ballot box.

"The voters of Iowa's 1st District deserve more than campaign ads and talking points," said Bridgford, "They deserve our respect. That means seeing every candidate stand side-by-side, answer the tough questions, and debate the issues that matter most to their families and communities before deciding who will represent them in Congress."

Across all 20 counties in Iowa's 1st Congressional District, voters are facing pressing concerns including rising grocery costs, rural healthcare access, agricultural policy, and local economic development. A televised, open forum on public television remains the gold standard for voters seeking genuine solutions rather than thirty-second political commercials.

The voters of IA-01 deserve a robust, civil, and constructive discussion on the issues that impact their daily lives. As the November election approaches, the electorate awaits confirmation on whether all candidates will honor Iowa's rich tradition of political transparency on the Iowa PBS stage.

The question remains- will they or won't they show up for Iowa voters ahead of election day?

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