

Head-to-head between Alsobrooks, Trone yields clashes, despite lack of policy differences

Friday night's meeting likely to be the only televised debate before May Democratic primary

By Louis Peck

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As has been the case at several joint appearances since last fall, Friday night's debate between Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks and U.S. Rep. David Trone of Potomac yielded a dearth of differences over policy issues in their race for the Democratic nomination to succeed retiring U.S. Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Baltimore).

But that didn't pre-empt the two from again clashing on matters ranging from their resumes to how they are financing their campaigns—along with who is better positioned to defeat the likely Republican nominee, former Gov. Larry Hogan, this fall.

Friday's session appeared likely to be the only televised debate prior to the May 14 primary, with the start of early voting in that contest less than two weeks away. The debate—sponsored by The Baltimore Sun, the University of Baltimore and Baltimore-based WBFF/Fox 45, and broadcast from the studios of the latter—was available for viewing in the Washington area on WBFF's sister station, News Channel 8.

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opponent, lacked.

“In the last two-year [election] cycle, \$1.9 billion of special interest money came into the Congress – that’s what we have to stop,” Trone declared, referring to donations from political action committees (PACs), which he has refused to accept. “We’ve got to get the money out of politics that’s really poisoning our system.”

Trone doubled-down on this front throughout the debate, and took aim at Alsobrooks in his closing statement, after she had called for an increase in corporate taxes to help deal with the mushrooming federal debt. “It’s going to be tough to raise taxes on those big companies when you’re taking all their dollars: That’s a challenge,” he told Alsobrooks.

In a “Fact Check” statement emailed to reporters during the debate, the Trone campaign cited recent FEC disclosure reports in charging that Alsobrooks had received “more than \$230,000” from lobbyists for energy and utility firms, along with \$25,000 from groups representing the pharmaceutical industry and another \$25,000 from those associated with the insurance industry.

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PULL QUOTE

- Angela Alsobrooks

The encounter also took place after the latest campaign disclosure reports were filed with the Federal Election Commission this past week showing Trone—co-owner of Total Wine & More, a nationwide chain of alcohol beverage retail outlets—spending nearly \$42 million out of his own pocket to largely self-finance his candidacy.

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