

Gallagher Misses Out on Green Bay Town Hall

Written by Bob Kiefert, Green Bay Progressive

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Constituents show up to talk about health care and other issues with the person elected to represent them. He didn't show up to listen.

GREEN BAY - About a hundred constituents showed up last night at the Brown County Central Library last night to share their concerns with their new Congressman Mike Gallagher. He didn't show up to listen.

Granted, the "Town Hall" listening session had been organized by local liberal and Democratic advocacy groups, but did that make them any less his constituents? Gallagher had been elected last fall to represent the 8th Congressional District and all the people who live in it.

I had the "good fortune" to be on a stage in 2009 with then Congressman Steve Kagen as he fielded questions from Tea Party advocates about the bill that would become ObamaCare. It was not very pleasant. But he hung in there, and answered every question as best he could. He was elected to represent them too.

Many Republican elected officials today seem to prefer hiding out from their constituents, "speaking" only to them on FaceBook, on telephone conference calls, or at pre-arranged campaign stops at friendly venues. They screen all questions, and answer only those they select. They certainly don't dare to meet all the people they represent face to face.

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According to [news reports](#), health care coverage and the American Health Care Act (AHCA), a Republican bill to replace the Affordable Care Act, was the topic most wanted to discuss. Gallagher had supported the bill during a House vote earlier this month. A line of area residents presented their personal concerns, told stories about children with pre-existing conditions, told their fears about losing their health care, and fears about rising costs. An empty chair sat on the stage where their "representative" was supposed to listen.

Some critics called it political theatre. But that's the easy political cop out. So was Gallagher's "out of town on business" excuse. If people cannot talk to their representatives, who do they represent?

It appears many in Washington today, and not just Republicans, represent only the industries and businesses who pay their bills. Gallagher is just joining the long line.

That's not what our "representative form of government" was supposed to be about.