

■ CROWD SIDES WITH GOP

Chairmen take on Tea Party meeting

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INDIAN HILL – When the chairmen of Hamilton County’s political parties – Republican and Democrat – come before a roomful of conservative Tea Party activists, it is not hard to guess which one would have the crowd on its side.

“My message is simple – we want your support,” Hamilton County Republican Chairman Alex Triantafilou said to an auditorium of 175 members of the Indian Hill Tea Party who gathered at Indian Hill Primary School.

The Tea Party movement, Triantafilou said, “has been a great thing for the Republican Party.”

Both he and Hamilton County Democratic Chairman Tim Burke were invited to speak to the Tea Party activists – a group that states its principles to be “fiscal responsibility, limited government and free markets.”

Each stood up and spoke for about five minutes, followed by a half hour of questioning that was mostly – but not entirely – directed at Burke, who gave a crowd of doubters a spirited defense of government having a role in helping citizens.

“I do hear your call for limited government, especially when it comes to how much government interferes in our personal lives – and, for me, that includes women’s right to choose and gay rights,” Burke said.

Burke pointed out that both he and Triantafilou grew up in families where their fathers were union members. Burke said his father, when he was growing up in Cleveland, was a meter reader and union member.

“It was government that protected his rights as a worker,” Burke said. “Without those government protections, I wouldn’t be here. My dad would have lost his job the first time he walked a picket line.”

A man in the audience challenged Burke, saying that when he was growing up and his father was working his union job, taxes in Ohio were much lower than they are now, and said that government is

holding people back.

As a member of the Ohio Board of Regents, Burke said that Republicans and Democrats on the board “are constantly wrestling with the question of how do we give more young people the opportunity to go to college, the same opportunity I had, being the first in my family to go to college.”

“You can shake your head, but government has to find ways to help people lift themselves up,” Burke said.

Triantafilou, in his opening remarks, said he wished the Tea Party people had been around in 2008, when the Republican Party was losing the White House and losing at the state and congressional level.

“We needed you in the summer of 2008 and the fall of 2008, when we elected the most liberal senator in the U.S. Senate to be president of the United States,” the GOP chairman said. “We need you now.”

Burke and Triantafilou did find one thing they agreed on when a person in the audience said he was tired of the extreme partisanship in Washington.

Triantafilou pointed out that, on the local level, Republicans and Democrats have worked together to cut \$50 million out of the county budget at a time of declining revenues.

“Good news doesn’t often get reported, but that is good news,” Triantafilou said.