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## Consultants react to Ariz. election, propositions

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Published: Saturday, October 16, 2010 10:46 AM MST

The Pinal Partnership hosted a question-and-answer session with four political consultants Friday who discussed ballot measures and political races to be decided in the upcoming election.

The format of the discussion elicited a broad spectrum of comment, which included topics such as online voting, the proposed legalization of marijuana and affirmative action.

One of the speakers, Democrat Mario Diaz, is president of Mario E. Diaz & Association, a government relations and public affairs firm.

Diaz said that in order for the Republicans to take back the U.S. House of Representatives this election, they need to win a congressional seat in Arizona. He said the Southwest could play a major role in deciding whether House Speaker Nancy Pelosi retains her position.

Republican Constantin Querard, founder and president of Discessio LLC, said passage of Proposition 203, which would legalize the use of doctor-prescribed marijuana, could have some unintended consequences. He said the laws against second-hand smoke in public places do not apply to medical marijuana.

Diaz said that if medical marijuana is legalized, it would be easy to get prescriptions for conditions as minor as a backache. He said people are talking about placing marijuana dispensaries in coffee houses.

Republican Camilla J. Strongin is a founding member of The Symington Group, which provides business, communications and political experience to various clients. Strongin said Prop. 203 might pass in a political environment that is more focused on SB 1070.

Proposition 107 would ban preferential hiring treatment or affirmative action laws in public employment, education or contracting. Querard said passage of this proposition would be a "major step forward" for the state.

Democrat Paul Ulan is principal of Primary Consultants LLC, a Phoenix-based market research consulting firm specializing in political campaign management. Speaking about political ads, Ulan said what voters typically say they want is information about what a candidate stands for and what he or she would do if elected.

"I can't think of one ad that does that — that's the environment we're in," Ulan said. "I can't think of one ad that is a positive ad."

Asked whether voting online is realistic or a good idea, Querard said the technology is not yet sophisticated enough to make the process secure.

"Can you make voting too easy?" he asked. "There's nothing wrong with having to put forth effort for something. You want people to participate in the process along the way."

"You want people to be more educated, more informed — you want them to have [voting] mean something," Ulan said. "I'm not convinced that making it easier is the way to go; it's pretty easy now."

The meeting of the group, which is a coalition of government and developers, was held at The Property Conference Center in Casa Grande.