

Opening Statement at Candidate Forum 9/09/20

Thank you, League, the News-Gazette and NAACP and Illinois Media for sponsoring tonight's forum and to all who watch.

I'm George Danos, your County Auditor. It has been my honor and pleasure to serve you as Auditor this half-term and I ask you to reelect me this fall. In 2018, I became the first CPA to serve as Auditor, thereby providing government with **both** certified credentials **and** democratic oversight. My master's in accounting is from the University of Illinois' top-tier program.

Allow me to provide you with a mid-term report. My duties are to report financials and to make sure county expenditures are paid correctly, lawfully and as you wished. I must enhance transparency and welcome whistleblowing from the community. I'd like to briefly tell you how I have performed all three functions.

By October 26th, when I will upload my third Annual Financial Report, or CAFR, it will be my third in less than two years. The previous four Republican CAFRs were late but under my tenure, we will deliver the 2019 and all subsequent CAFRs *without any extensions at all*. I have stepped in to perform the treasurer's bank reconciliations and I am still under budget with that out-of-scope duty. In this office, competence resides with CPAs and you, the voters, obtained one without giving away your civic duty and rights to some murky appointment process.

At votechampaign.org, you can find the answers to the candidates' surveys. My opponent called for placing online a listing of vendor contracts and capital assets—and he promised to do so within three *months*. That's very decisive. I liked the proposal so much I did so in three **weeks**. You will find these hyperlinks on the County Auditor website.

You'll also find the first-time ever Waste, Fraud and Abuse portal. I thank those constituents who have already reported suspicions about the misuse of county funds, and I urge you to continue to do so.

Champaign voters, I have demonstrated my skill and dedication as an accountant, as a watchdog and as a publicist of financial data. I ask your vote this November to continue my good work.

Closing Statement

Fellow Champaign County voters, colleagues in County government, I have had a busy and eventful two years of service as Auditor, whether I was involved in making long-term plans, in refining routine tasks or in assisting other departments. I take responsibility, offer no excuses, and accept and discharge exogenous challenges, come what may.

As we close this forum, I take this time to look forward.

We, in the auditor's office, are bracing for a long-awaited entry into the 21st century as the IT department and the auditor's office implement and train others on the new Enterprise Resource Program. I have identified a Master Trainer in my office to work alongside department fiscal managers. Everyone will be able to use a graphic interface with improved production of dashboard reports. We will bring forth both greater accuracy and a decrease in the time devoted to data entry for many county employees.

I will also, in concert with the next treasurer, obtain the best solution for county-issued credit cards. There are methods to both place tighter controls on vendors and purchases and to allow their more flexible and convenient use by departments.

I know these goals are worthy and attainable. The Danos administration of the Auditor's office has already led to many concrete improvements.

Whereas before my election we spent \$7,000 on conferences, training, dues and licenses and yet had NO current or active CPAs in the office, we now, for \$4,000, have two: both myself and my new chief deputy.

Whereas, in the recent past, elected and appointed auditors were dependent on inherited staff or made affinity hires, I have made merit my only criterion for hiring and retention.

Whereas, prior to November 2018, Champaign County allowed departments to circumvent the three-bids requirement by declaring emergencies, I do not.

Yes, it does take a CPA—whether by appointment or election, though the latter is preferable. With Danos you get both the relevant professionalism AND the democratic accountability of elections. I therefore ask you to re-elect me, George Danos, as your Auditor in 2020 to a job I have fulfilled with confidence and delight. Thank you and good night.