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### LOCAL NEWS

## Toomey, Green in war of words

*By Deborah Eisner / Chronicle Staff*  
Thursday, April 22, 2004

The signature deadline hasn't even passed, yet the two Democratic candidates for the 26th Middlesex are squaring off in a war of words.

In a letter sent to state Rep. Tim Toomey and the press last Wednesday, Avi Green challenged Toomey to a series of five debates between now and the September primary. Both men seek the Democratic nomination for the 26th Middlesex District, the East Cambridge seat Toomey has held since 1993.

The deadline to file papers to run for state office is April 27.

Toomey has agreed to the debates, but suggested that his opponent is a "Johnny-come-lately" to the issue. The state rep, who also serves on the Cambridge City Council, said he had already agreed to a May 12 debate when he received Green's letter.

"That was over a week ago. He's a little late on the story," Toomey, 50, said.

He said he received Green's letter on Thursday, April 15 - one day after he received a call from the Somerville Journal, the Chronicle's sister paper. "He wants to go

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through the media for some reason," the veteran politician added.

Green maintains he sent the letter to Toomey at the same time as he sent it to the press.

"I can't wait to debate Tim Toomey. Let's not get distracted from the main issues here. I don't think the focus should be on when and when not Mr. Toomey decides to read his mail. I think the issues should be on who can better represent Cambridge and Somerville," Green, 30, said.

Toomey also suggested that talking about debates before the list of candidates is finalized is premature. Sam Seidel pulled papers for the Democratic ticket, but has since told the Chronicle that he will not seek office. There is one Republican running for the seat.

Although, this is Green's first run for office, he is no stranger to Cambridge's political scene. Green ran Jarrett Barrios' state Senate race in 2002 and managed Carole Bellew's unsuccessful bid for City Council last year. He also considered running for council himself, but pulled out, evidently to prepare for this race. Green is engaged to marry another former Barrios consultant, Sarah Almer.

Toomey has been a Cambridge staple since 1989 when he first ran for and won a seat on the City Council. He took on a second public salary when he won his House seat in 1993. He was born and raised in East Cambridge.

Green's original letter suggested a series of five debates - one each month- to give voters "the opportunity to examine our positions and records." No dates or formats have been established, but the Cambridge Chronicle and Somerville Journal have both expressed an interest in future debates to help decide the fate of the rep seat.

The candidates, who both take pride in the progressive label, disagree on what issues need to be debated.

"The fiscal situation of the state is still not what it should be. It's a top priority," Toomey said.

But Green disagrees, instead flipping that notion on its head. "The fiscal situation in Cambridge and Somerville is not what it should be, and that's a top priority," he said.

Green instead named the death penalty, abortion rights, gun control, corporate tax loopholes and unemployment as the most important issues for debate.

Both say they are anti-death penalty, pro-gun control, opposed to corporate tax loopholes and in favor of creating new jobs in the district. The only hard and fast distinction is Green's pro-choice stance versus Toomey's pro-life one. Toomey did flip-flop on the death penalty following the 1997 murder of 6-year-old Jeffrey Curley, but today says he is against capital punishment.

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