

Forum Draws Candidates

By *Ann E. Marimow and Nancy Trejos*

Washington Post Staff Writers

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All five men running for Montgomery County executive and nearly two dozen County Council candidates turned out last Thursday night for a forum organized by Action in Montgomery, an interfaith network of congregations that has championed programs for immigrants and the poor.

Most of the candidates pledged to support AIM's progressive agenda: to increase the supply of affordable housing, open a full-service immigration office, make it easier for students to go to college and provide better community centers.

It made perfect sense for them to do so. AIM has 31,000 members at or above voting age. The group has also started a voter turnout drive, focusing its efforts on two districts -- one in Gaithersburg and another in Burtonsville. It has dispatched 100 volunteers to knock on doors and 108 to call potential voters this week and on Tuesday, the day of the primary. "We know we're not going to sway elections, but if we're going to increase voter participation by 25 percent in these two precincts, then we can do it anywhere, and the candidates have to watch out," said *Alisa Glassman*, AIM's lead organizer.

More than 600 AIM members turned out to hear what the candidates had to say about their agenda items.

To cheers, Democratic candidates Silverman, Leggett and *Robert Raymond Fustero* and independent *Robin Ficker* said yes to all of them, including building 1,000 affordable and workforce housing units on public land by 2009 and increasing the percentage of such units in all new projects and condo conversions from 12.5 percent to 25 percent. Republican *Chuck Floyd* said he would rather find a more "holistic" approach to adding affordable housing. And he said he did not believe it is the role of the government to open immigration centers.