



# Senate showdown

## Hagan, Tillis hold back no punches in Wilmington debate

By Adam Wagner

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During a Thursday debate at WECT studios in Wilmington, Republican challenger Thom Tillis attacked incumbent Democratic U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan for not showing up to work while Hagan threw barbs at Tillis for what he'd done

when he showed up to his own job.

Hagan contended that Tillis' nearly four years as speaker of the N.C. House have been a net loss for the state and that the Republican is more interested in discussing her candidacy than his own. Tillis, meanwhile, maintained Hagan is simply a "rubber

stamp" for President Barack Obama's strategies and missed Armed Services Committee hearings where the threat of the group calling itself the Islamic State was discussed.

The Senate race is tight, according to a Suffolk University and USA Today poll released Wednesday.

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Sen. Kay Hagan, D-N.C., Libertarian Party candidate Sean Haugh and Republican candidate Thom Tillis at Thursday night's U.S. Senate debate at WECT studios in Wilmington. Photo by Associated Press

## SENATE

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day, with 46.8 percent of the 500 polled saying they'd vote for Hagan, 45.4 percent saying they'd vote for Tillis and 4.4 percent saying they'd vote for Sean Haugh, a Libertarian candidate.

When asked in a brief post-debate press conference why the debate had taken such a negative tone, Tillis said, "The people of North Carolina need to understand that the president's policies are negative for America. ... I didn't personally attack anybody, but I am attacking policies that are destroying jobs and making the nation less safe and secure."

Tillis at several points mentioned that Hagan has voted with Obama Administration policies 96 percent of the time and was particularly critical of the Affordable Care Act, which he referred to as "Obamacare."

Hagan's record on the Armed Services Committee was a point of contention, as Tillis repeated a talking point that Hagan has missed half of the committee's 2014 hearings.

Since he announced his bid for the Senate, Tillis has at least twice been in Washington raising money while his colleagues in the North Carolina House debated or negotiated key leg-

islation, according to The Associated Press.

Tillis said there is a stark difference between his missing "a couple legislative votes" and Hagan's record.

"Senator Hagan didn't show up for work and that's why she needs to be fired," Tillis said of Hagan's committee attendance.

Hagan left without taking questions, but did defend her record during the debate.

"I am well informed on these issues, but I think Speaker Tillis has been spineless because he will not say what he believes," Hagan said. Hagan also said she has supported taking action against ISIS, including arming and training moderate Syrian rebels.

Also in question Thursday was a motion filed by Tillis and Phil Berger, president pro tem of the N.C. Senate. According to the News and Observer, the "motion to intervene" indicates that a decision made by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals regarding the legalization of gay marriage should not be binding to what happens in North Carolina. The motion also indicates that Virginia's attorney general made too many concessions to gay marriage in that state's challenge.

"Speaker Tillis is wasting your taxpayers dollars," Hagan said, "on further litigating a law that, pretty much,

the Supreme Court has said, 'Leave it alone.'"

Hagan said earlier that she doesn't believe a government has the power to tell citizens who to marry.

Tillis defended his decision, saying 60 percent of North Carolinians had voted against gay marriage.

"That's why I'm doing my job," he said. "If Senator Hagan would do her job, showing up for committee meetings, not being a rubber stamp for President Obama, I may not be running for Senate."

Hagan was critical of many of Tillis' decisions as speaker, saying he was in part responsible for tax cuts for the wealthy, opposition to a bill that would have provided equal pay for women, a lack of education funding and the end of the film tax credit.

"It is not how you grow up, it is how you treat people as a grown up," Hagan said of Tillis, "and he has slammed shut the door of opportunity for everybody else."

Thursday was Haugh's first appearance in a debate.

When asked afterward if his policies appealed more to Democrats or Republicans, Haugh said, "I think the divide is more between the political class and the real world."

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