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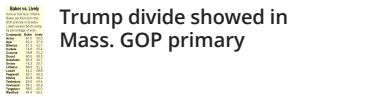
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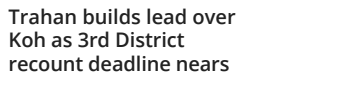
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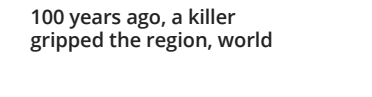
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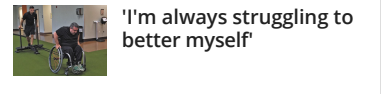
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Why are organizers excluding Ayyadurai from U.S. Senate debates?

The Lowell Sun

UPDATED: 09/15/2018 10:35:07 AM EDT

Why wasn't independent candidate Shiva Ayyadurai invited to participate in a series of three Massachusetts U.S. Senate debates with Democrat incumbent Elizabeth Warren and Republican Geoff Diehl?

We just went through a 3rd Congressional District primary race with 10 Democrat candidates -- some of whom never had a chance to win from the very beginning -- but they were all respected for running and their views disseminated in dozens of stories published in this newspaper.

We invited all 10 to debates this newspaper co-sponsored with Fitchburg State University, and with the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce.

We never said a candidate was "legitimate or not legitimate" based on their viewpoints or the amount of campaign money they raised. All were included -- and the public was the eventual winner for getting to know about each and every candidate.

So if we can accommodate 10 candidates -- because it is the right thing to do -- why can't The Boston Globe, WBZ-TV, WCVB-TV, Springfield news outlets, the Springfield Public Forum, and UMass-Boston, do the same?

Are they afraid of Dr. Ayyadurai and his views, including his unwavering support of President Donald Trump?

Ayyadurai was the first candidate to qualify for the Nov. 6 general election ballot, so this can't be an oversight.

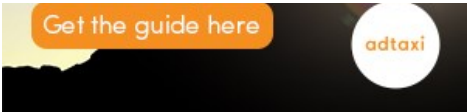
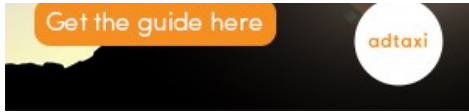
Yet the medical and business entrepreneur is being mysteriously excluded from the consortium's three scheduled debates.

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Ayyadurai collected 20,000 signatures statewide from registered voters to get on the ballot as an independent candidate. He has earned the right to be on stage and share his views with the other candidates.

Debate organizers should immediately extend an invitation to Ayyadurai. He's not a Johnny-Come-Lately to the race, but someone who's been actively campaigning for more than a year.

Earlier this year, Ayyadurai switched his GOP affiliation to independent.

Born in India and raised in New Jersey, Ayyadurai is a well-known scientist who holds four degrees from the Mass. Institute of Technology.

On Wednesday, Ayyadurai filed a federal lawsuit against the UMass system -- one of the debates will be hosted at UMass Boston -- saying his free speech rights are being denied.

It's neither fair or democratic that a public institution would ignore a candidate who has legally obtained a spot on the November ballot through the difficult signature process.

If Warren and Diehl have any regard for a transparent electoral system -- and the public's right to know -- they should make the request to organizers that Ayyadurai be asked to join them for the three debates.

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