

Iowa 1st District race will be about jobs, Obama, Braley: Blum

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The top three issues in the Iowa's 1st District congressional race next year will be "jobs, jobs and jobs," according to Dubuque businessman [Rod Blum](#).



Rod Blum

The 56-year-old CEO of [Digital Canal Inc.](#), which develops and designs software for home builders, has seen first-hand what has happened to jobs in homebuilding.

"We're at ground zero," he said Oct. 24 after formally announcing in Dubuque that he will seek the Republican nomination to face three-term Democratic Rep. Bruce Braley of Waterloo. His company's employment has fallen from 45 to less than one-third of that as a result of the housing slump.

Blum joins Cedar Rapids businessman [Steve Rathje](#) in seeking the GOP nomination. Independence attorney [Ben Lange](#), who came within 2 percentage points of defeating Braley in 2010, is considering another run at Braley.

If he gets the nomination, Blum said, he will be "running against Bruce Braley and Barack Obama and their policies."

Since President Obama took office, "he and Bruce Braley have racked up \$4 trillion in deficits," Blum said in his announcement at a Dubuque hotel. The national debt has grown to \$15 trillion – the same as the Gross Domestic Product.

"If we don't start living within our means, Greece's future will be our future," Blum warned.

"When I begged my parents for something, most of the time the answer was 'We can't afford it,'" he said. "I didn't like to hear that answer but my parents knew they couldn't spend more than they made. If my parents, with their 10th grade educations could figure that out, why can't Washington politicians?"

He wants to apply his parents' fiscal common sense to federal spending.

Blum didn't spare Republicans in his criticism of Washington.

"The older I get the less attention I pay to what people say and more attention to what they actually do," he said. "Quite frankly, people are sick and tired of hearing one thing from politicians on the campaign trail and seeing a different thing once they're in office. And Republicans are just as guilty as Democrats of forgetting whose money they're spending and who they're supposed to be representing."

The disgust with Washington should work to a challenger's benefit, Blum said. Braley, as an incumbent will have a name identification advantage.

"But the people I talk to, average people, not just activists, are really upset," Blum said. "They say people in Washington got us into this mess.

"That gives me hope," he said.

He's also encouraged by the tea party movement, which he called "the greatest example of grassroots citizenship I have seen in this country in my lifetime."

Blum stands with "every patriot who believes Washington DC is out of control ... (and) the proper role of government should be limited ... who wants to hold Washington accountable ... who believes America's greatness comes from its citizens."

A Dubuque native, Blum is a graduate of Dubuque Senior High School and earned a bachelor's degree from Loras College before getting an MBA from Dubuque University in 1989.

He was one of the initial employees of Eagle Point Software in Dubuque in 1989 and was CEO and an owner when the company, which grew from five to 325 employees in five years, went public. In addition to Digital Canal, Blum is a land developer.

He and his wife, Karen, have five children.

In addition to Linn County, beginning in 2012, the 1st District will cover Worth, Mitchell, Howard, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Bremer, Fayette, Clayton, Black Hawk, Buchanan, Delaware, Dubuque, Marshall, Tama, Benton, Jones, Jackson, Poweshiek and Iowa counties.