

# Desire to change health care led Miller-Meeks to run

[| Print |](#)

By James Q. Lynch

## The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — It was after one of her trips to Washington to advocate for change in the health care system that Mariannette Miller-Meeks started thinking about running for Congress.

"There was no progress, no energy for those issues," the Ottumwa ophthalmologist said.

"I thought maybe I need to go a step further and run for Congress," Miller-Meeks said. "I felt like my pager was going off and I had to answer the call." Now the 52-year-old former Army nurse is in a three-way primary to determine the Republican challenger to freshman 2nd District Rep. Dave Loebsack, a Mount Vernon Democrat.

Miller-Meeks wasn't impressed when she met Loebsack on her lobbying trips as president of the Iowa Medical Society. "He didn't have a grasp on the issues," Miller-Meeks said.

Although Loebsack knocked off longtime Republican Rep. Jim Leach in 2006, Miller-Meeks isn't intimidated. Voters in the 2nd District "are disappointed in how they are being represented," she said.

Talking about the 2nd District race, Rep. Tom Cole of Virginia, the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, said Loebsack and other Democratic freshmen "came here to change things, and every poll will tell you the American people don't think anything has changed." Before she can face Loebsack, however, Miller-Meeks will face Lee Harder of Hillsboro and Peter Teahen of Cedar Rapids in the June 3 primary. Miller-Meeks thinks her experience and expertise in health care, which, she points out, touches individuals as well as employers, gives her an advantage.

And with the nation at war, her military service, including her service as an Army Reserve physician, gives her credibility, she said.

"I know veterans' issues: I've walked in their shoes," said Miller-Meeks, who retired from the reserve as a lieutenant colonel after 24 years.

Miller-Meeks' concerns don't stop with health care. The first-time candidate also wants to reform Social Security, revitalize the GI Bill and reconstruct taxes.

Young workers have a legitimate concern regarding social insecurity, she said, because they realize politicians have allowed Social Security funds to be

squandered.

Miller-Meeks said the GI Bill covers very little of the cost of tuition and veterans must pay it all before being reimbursed. She wants veterans — including members of the Guard and Reserve — to get assistance for college, vocational school, even graduate schools.

Compliance with the current tax system requires too much time and invites corruption, Miller-Meeks said. She would like to see consideration of a flat tax or "fair tax" — a national sales tax.

Members of the U.S. House serve two years and are paid \$169,300 a year. The 2nd District includes Linn, Johnson, Cedar and Washington counties and much of southeast Iowa.

More information about Miller-Meeks ' campaign can be found at <http://millermeeksforcongress.com> | Contact the writer at (319) 398-8375 or at [James.Lynch@gazettecommunications.com](mailto:James.Lynch@gazettecommunications.com)

[Close Window](#)