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Activists confront lawmakers Scott Martin, Bryan Cutler in heated town hall



SAM JANESCH | Staff Writer May 16, 2017



State Sen. Scott Martin, R-Martic Township, talks with Lancaster resident Michelle Hines in an exchange in which Martin called her a liar after the Monday night town hall.

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Several local activists engaged and routinely disrupted two Lancaster County lawmakers during a town hall Monday night that became heated as they argued about health care, pipelines and immigration.


State Sen. Scott Martin and Rep. Bryan Cutler continuously tried to quiet the crowd down and stop the crosstalk as about a dozen constituents argued with them.

Related: [Sen. Martin drafting bill to make protesters liable for emergency response efforts](#)

Those same constituents kept going after the 45-minute Q&A, when they gathered around Martin and one of the emotional exchanges ended with Martin calling a woman a liar and then walking away.


“I don’t have time, I don’t need to talk with, I don’t have to interact with folks who really want nothing more than to film you and make up stuff and not talk what’s real,” Martin, a Martic Township Republican, said in an interview after it was all over.

 **Sam Janesch** @samjanLNP 15 May
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After the Q&A ended, protesters, mostly with @lancstandsup, shouted "do your job." pic.twitter.com/InnE2JgoBK

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Martin called Michelle Hines a "liar" for accusing him of making disparaging comments about immigrants in a private meeting with her. pic.twitter.com/ALpPXw9eQR

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While the freshman senator has held smaller public events with constituents since entering office in January, Monday’s event was his first full town hall. Cutler, a six-term Republican from Peach Bottom who has often held town halls, said this was the most contentious one he’s ever been a part of.





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About to tweet out a few videos from the state Sen. Scott Martin-Rep. Bryan Cutler town hall earlier in Solanco. It got a bit heated.

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'I think we disagree'

The 130-person crowd of southern Lancaster residents filled about half of the Solanco High School cafeteria. Organizers had prepared for 165 attendees, and a few non-district residents were turned away at the door.

The crowd was mostly older, and included several members of Lancaster Stands Up and Lancaster Against Pipelines -- two groups that have protested the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline and some of the decisions by Republican U.S. Rep. Lloyd Smucker. They have **repeatedly called on Smucker**, a freshman congressman, to hold his first in-person town hall at a time when activists across the country have flooded public events for their congressional members.

During a question about whether Martin and Cutler support the federal American Health Care Act proposal, or if they would support a single-payer system, both lawmakers said they don't prefer single-payer.

One woman asked whether they would "protect Pennsylvania."

"Will we protect Pennsylvania? Yes," Cutler replied. "But I'm going to freely admit I think we disagree on how to best do that."



Sam Janesch @samjanLNP

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Nelly Torres, of Lancaster, interrupted the Q&A to ask what they think about AHCA and single-payer. Cutler responded.

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Multiple opponents of the Atlantic Sunrise pipeline spoke out against [Martin's legislation to make protesters liable](#) for emergency response costs associated with their protests.

Martin supports the pipeline that would go through 37 miles of Lancaster County and is scheduled to begin construction this summer.

Martin said he hasn't formally introduced the bill yet because he does not want it to target peaceful local protesters, and because he wants to "thread that needle to ensure that you're not infringing on anyone's first amendment rights."

But those like Tim Spiese, a leader among the pipeline group, criticized Martin for [seeking the advice of North Dakota officials](#) who handled the protests surrounding the Dakota Access Pipeline Last year.

Spiese said police there used "bullets, rubber bullets, tear gas (and) dogs against women and children who were doing nothing but fair protests." Martin replied that there were more than 700 arrests and nearly all of them were from people out of state who caused significant damage to the area.

In an exchange with Spiese after the forum, Martin said he would meet with Spiese before he introduces the bill.

Other arguments erupted over immigration issues, including [Senate Bill 10](#), which aims to strip sanctuary cities of their state funding.



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15 May

Replying to @samjanLNP @lancstandsup

Martin called Michelle Hines a "liar" for accusing him of making disparaging comments about immigrants in a private meeting with her. pic.twitter.com/ALpXw9eQR



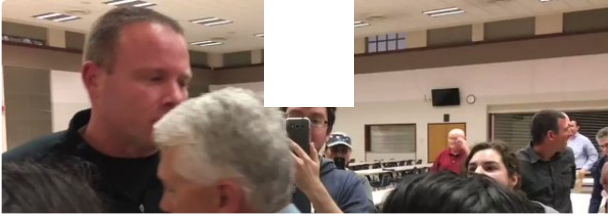
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Martin talks with DACA recipient Claudia Paz, who asks about his support for SB10, which defunds sanctuary cities of state money. pic.twitter.com/PMrJhflqj6

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In one heated exchange after the Q&A, Michelle Hines of Lancaster accused him of making disparaging remarks about immigrants in a private meeting they had last month.

“You said, ‘They come here and they don’t hold our American values. They bring their own values. They think they can beat their wives and beat women and we have to teach them that that’s not OK,’” Hines, an active Lancaster Stands Up members, said of her meeting with Martin.

“Really?” Martin replied. “Alright. Alright. If you truly thought that that was, you’re a liar,” he said, walking away.

Martin later told LNP he was referring to how state-funded immigration services should use more of their resources to help immigrants adjust.

“I said we had to deal with cases because, culturally, there’s some people that think it’s OK to beat women or children, so children and youth (services) has had (to do) a little bit more,” Martin said.

Martin, in a statement late Monday night after the event, said he was “deeply disappointed” in the disruptions.

Multiple frustrated constituents left the meeting while the protesters were speaking out, and Martin and Cutler said they hope to address the unanswered questions.