



Gubernatorial candidates speak at unique convention

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EAST LANSING, Mich. (NEWSCHANNEL 3) – The race to November is on and both of Michigan's gubernatorial candidates are in full campaign mode.

It's a big week for both Republican Rick Snyder and Democrat Virg Bernero, both of whom face big decisions ahead of the weekend's party conventions.

On Thursday both men put their focus on a specific block of voters at a different kind of convention, something that's never been done before and certainly wasn't a typical political convention.

You could say the candidates found themselves in the sandbox. Thursday's event saw kids allowed to have a little fun while parents and the candidates mixed in some politics at the Sandbox Party Convention in East Lansing.

The group Great Start held the event at the Breslin Center at MSU to push for more funding for education birth to five and believe it or not, the politicians in the midst of a tough campaign paid attention, even though those in the Sandbox Party won't be old enough to cast votes in November.

"We want them to see us as a force to reckon with basically," said Jennifer Lange.

Lange brought her children to the new-style convention to hear how the candidates are going to keep the new generation in the state.

"We're here to rally for the kids to make sure they're ready to learn and succeed when they're in school," said Lange.

Speaking in front of fidgeting kids, over noisemakers and while dodging beach-balls that were flying in the air, the candidates made simple pitches to those who came to the event. After the rally both tried to convince reporters that they have young children in mind as they campaign.

"We eat, drink and sleep early education in my household," said Democrat Virg Bernero. "I mentioned parents are the first educator. We need to make sure we support parents, we need to start with healthcare."

"Need to stop being divisive and to work and win together and reinvent Michigan, not just fix Michigan," said Republican Rick Snyder.

Keeping one eye on her kids, Lange said education is priority one in making her decision in the upcoming gubernatorial election.

"They want to make Michigan a stronger, more viable place for kids to stay," said Lange. "We want them to go to college and stay here afterwards."

Some of the media covering the event said they had never seen a political convention quite like Thursday's.