

Letter: Laxalt is more than just a name

To the community,

There's a saying among lawyers that you need to show your case not tell it. While busy telling us that Adam Laxalt's campaign is all about his last name, Jon Ralston shows us something quite different. As Ralston concedes, Adam Laxalt is, "A graduate of Georgetown University, Adam stayed in Washington for his law degree, too, then landed ... jobs with Bolton, an undersecretary of state at the time, and then-Sen. John Warner from Virginia before a five-year stint in the Navy, including a deployment to Iraq as a judge advocate general."

Ralston could have added that as a JAG in Iraq, Adam held a significant post in detainee operations, putting away jihadist insurgents trying to kill American soldiers and Marines. He could also have stated that Adam served as a Navy and federal prosecutor and then taught law and leadership to future U.S. Navy and Marine Corps officers at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. The point being, if Adam Laxalt were named Adam Smith, to borrow another of Ralston's jibes, he would still be a great candidate.

I've known Adam and his family since we were first year law students at Georgetown. I was in his wedding and he was in mine. Adam could have pursued a partner track at a big Washington law firm. His credentials – and family name – would have made that pretty easy. Instead he went to Iraq.

While Adam spent time in Washington, he was never of it. When he got out of the Navy, he married a great woman that he met at church. He moved to Nevada to raise his family and work in the private sector. It is hard to picture a path more commendable for someone asking voters to entrust them with

public office. And yet somehow this path has less merit to Mr. Ralston than that of Adam's opponent – a 38-year-old career politician, running for another step-up office to the Governor's mansion? As a quarter-century professional observer of Nevada politics, perhaps Ralston should give Nevada voters a bit more credit.

Adam is no doubt honored to carry his family name. From the days since we first met, Adam's finest memories were of spending time with his grandfather and family up at Marlette Lake in the Sierra Nevadas. And who could not love spending time with the unmatched personalities at Sen. Laxalt's annual lamb fry, when the Basque tradition of Nevada's mountains came to Washington?

Almost all will agree that Sen. Paul Laxalt is a great American. He was the vanguard of the western Republicans that changed America and made the Reagan Revolution possible. Robert Laxalt is Nevada's greatest novelist. Dominique Laxalt conquered Nevada's basin and range as an immigrant Basque sheepherder when Nevada was the frontier, west of the west.

Adam Paul Laxalt will carry on the legacy of that name. But let's not be mistaken, Adam set out on his own path long ago.

Michael McClellan, Newport Beach