

Blackwell's extremism would be a liability

The Sept. 5 debate between Ken Blackwell and Ted Strickland was interesting and contentious. It covered many topics but regrettably only lightly touched on what is becoming perhaps the most important matter facing Ohioans: the negative effect that the growing influences of the radical evangelical movement and its values will have on the future of Ohio.

Ohio's economy is suffering from the loss of several hundred thousand manufacturing jobs. What is the solution to this problem? Our gubernatorial candidates and others agree that we must develop a knowledge-based economy. U.S. Rep. Sherrod Brown is wisely proposing that Northeast Ohio become the ``Silicon Valley" of alternative energy. The idea of developing a knowledge-based economy is smart, but there is an underlying problem.

Cutting-edge companies and their employees want to be located in a state that is advancing knowledge based on fact, science and worldly cultural development. Furthermore, these types of companies want to be located in an environment that is tolerant to other points of view. The ``my way or the highway" authoritarian, dictatorial attitude of this movement is not conducive to the growth of creativity and scientific study. Leaders in this movement, such as Deborah Owens Fink, the Revs. Russell Johnson and Rod Parsley, and Ken Blackwell are guided by an ideology and style that usurps reason -- and therefore, cutting-edge technologies.

Blackwell talks a big game about economic incentives and tax cuts that will help the economy of Ohio. He and his main support base, the evangelical extremists, will most certainly discourage such development with their ideas of teaching ``intelligent design" in science classes, prohibiting stem-cell research, prohibiting abortion under any circumstances, and instituting other ``values" that allow government to dictate how we live our personal lives.

If such extreme, absolute ideas were to prevail, I -- as an international businessman -- would be very reluctant to locate in Ohio a knowledge-based, technologically advanced firm that might employ hundreds of people.

Richard King