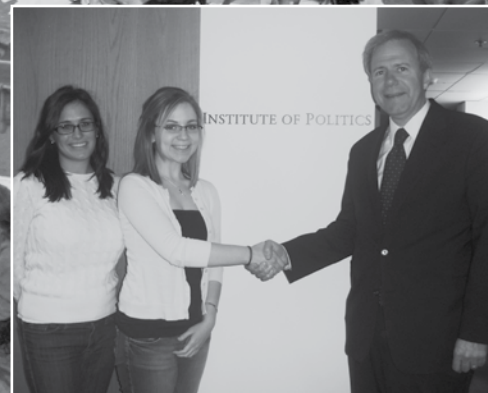




# THE Soapbox

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE CENTER for POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

## Election News Dominates CPP Activities



HOT SHOTS

FULL DISCLOSURE

MODEL CAMPAIGN USA

FORMER FELLOWS: TWO EXPERIENCES

AN UPSET IN THE 3RD CD

*Did you know  
that in the past  
soapbox crates were used as  
temporary platforms  
for making  
impromptu public  
speeches?*



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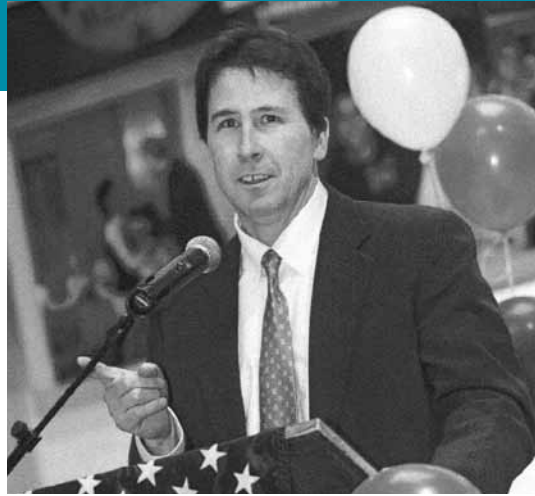
*Allegheny's Campus Center was filled to capacity on Election Night 2008. (Photo by Bill Owen)*

*INSET: CPP Fellows Elizabeth Andrews '09 and Christina Walrond '09 met this year with Harvard's Bill Purcell of the Institute of Politics. See story on page 8. (Photo by Mary Solberg)*

# FROM *the* DIRECTOR

Every election is important, but it seems that certain elections are more important than others. Momentous issues, dramatic social or economic changes, wars, scandals, candidates and a host of other factors can place exceptional attention on an election. These events lead to heightened public interest, dramatic changes in policy, and adjustments in how elections are conducted for years to come. Their shockwaves last for years, if not generations.

Without question, 2008 was such an election year. Barack Obama was elected as our nation's first African-American president, but consider these other landmarks: Hillary Clinton was the first viable woman candidate for a major party nomination; the Democratic nomination process proved unprecedentedly long and competitive; Sarah Palin was the first woman to run on a Republican presidential ticket; it was the most expensive election in history, leaving the presidential campaign finance system in shambles; levels of partisanship reached a 50-year high; voter turnout in both the primary and general election spiked; and candidates harnessed the power of the Internet for help in reaching voters and raising funds in unprecedented ways, forever changing the nature of campaign communications. Locally, we witnessed a 14-year incumbent lose reelection to a Democrat who had never held public office. My goodness, what an election!



It probably comes as no surprise that the Center for Political Participation had an exceptionally busy year, trying to keep up with it all. As you will see in the pages to follow, we drew a sharp focus on engaging our students and members of the community into the process. After the election, we sponsored major events designed to evaluate the role of the media and to chart the real-life experiences of young campaign consultants. We also held our Model Campaign USA event, hosting more than 100 area high school students. Without a doubt, it was one of our busiest years ever.

As always, a special thanks goes to our student fellows for their professionalism and enthusiasm and to our professional staff that somehow helped to pull things off nearly without a hitch. Mary Solberg, who joined the CPP team in fall 2008 as our program coordinator, has surely proven her stripes during this busy year. Many alumni and friends of the CPP aided our efforts this year, and we are most grateful.

Finally, we owe special thanks to Jim Mullen, Allegheny's president, and his wife, Mari Mullen, for their unwavering support of our varied initiatives. Both are truly interested in politics and are passionate about engaging young Americans in the process. The CPP will surely benefit from their knowledge, passion and assistance in the years to come.

Best regards,

Daniel M. Shea, Ph.D.

# Historic Election Dominated CPP Activities

BY RICHARD SHAFRAR



When Carrie Miller '09 arrived at Grace United Methodist Church in Meadville on Election Day 2008, the waiting line went out the front doors. She waited a full hour before she could vote, while some of her peers waited three times as long during peak voting hours.

"I was lucky I didn't have class," Miller recalls of that historic day when Barack Obama was elected the country's first African-American president.

Young voters, like Miller and hundreds of other Allegheny College students, inundated polling places last year. Their enthusiasm for the 2008 presidential race was palpable across the nation as college students rallied and debated unlike they have in recent decades.

**Young voters, like Miller and hundreds of other Allegheny College students, inundated polling places last year.**

That energy pervaded Allegheny College, too, where the Center for Political Participation spent much of the 2008-09 academic year focusing on the presidential election and its ramifications for the future.

CPP fellows helped register 900 Allegheny students to vote, and spent hours driving students to the polls on Election Day.

Scores of students gathered on the second floor of the Campus Center to watch the final presidential debate Oct. 15 at Grounds for



*The youth vote was a significant factor in the 2008 presidential election. Allegheny students were actively involved.*



*Former Allegheny student Lin McCollum, left, and Sarah Bickel '11 celebrated Barack Obama's win.*



*Allegheny student Sara Doan '11 cheered for presidential hopeful John McCain.*

Change coffeehouse. The CPP co-sponsored the evening's events with the College Democrats and College Republicans. Students of all political stripes turned out to enjoy warm drinks and lively political discussion; many were bedecked in political regalia, others were undecided and more interested in hearing both sides than cheering one candidate. The atmosphere was raucous, yet positive, and friendlier than the debate itself. Obama supporters munched McCain/Palin cookies, and McCain supporters willingly passed along Allegheny for Obama signup sheets.

On Election Night, an orderly mob numbering in the hundreds was glued to big projection screens at the Campus Center lobby. Revelers enjoyed the commentary and predictions throughout the night, along with refreshments and hors d'oeuvres provided by the CPP, Allegheny for Obama, College Democrats, and College Republicans. Emotions ran strong throughout the night; each of CNN's state projections drew cheers from alternating camps of supporters. The night ended with thunderous, extended applause, embraces and handshakes among those whose friendships grew over the course of the long campaign season. Tears of joy and exhaustion reigned as news networks called the election for Barack Obama. ●



*CPP fellows Christina Walrond '09 and Jimmy Beyer '09 manned a voter motor pool table all day during the 2008 Presidential election. (Photo by Mary Solberg)*

The CPP helped register 900 Allegheny students to vote in the 2008 presidential election.



CPP fellows logged 80 miles on Election Day to transport Allegheny students to the polls.



## ON-CAMPUS EVENTS

# Full Disclosure: The Media and the 2008 Election

BY MARY SOLBERG

The sound bites. The headlines. The blogs. When it came to presidential politics this past year, the media had a lot to say. That's why the Center for Political Participation at Allegheny hosted a daylong, post-election event featuring noted print and broadcast journalists, as well as college newspaper editors from throughout the region.

Washington Post syndicated columnist E.J. Dionne was the featured speaker at last year's Nov. 20 conference, titled "Full Disclosure: The Media and the 2008 Election." During his evening presentation at Ford Chapel, Dionne spoke about the impact of President Barack Obama's victory and the role college students played in his win.

"I have a very, very upbeat view of your generation," Dionne told the students gathered in the packed chapel. "I'm going to lay a very heavy burden on you all before I finish this speech because I think you are in a position to create change in this country in a way that no generation has done, I think, since the 'Greatest Generation,' since that World War II generation."

Borrowing Obama's campaign slogans of hope and change, Dionne advised students to never believe that hope is naïve.

"Hope is realistic about what is, but imagines what might be. Hope sees through empty cynicism, it sees around the corners of our current difficulties," Dionne explained.

One of the challenges facing America today, he added, is that Americans need to restore their faith in government. He credited the Obama Administration for steering us in that direction.

"I like to think of barackobama.com as the most successful high-tech start-up of the last

two years. The power of what they did is not that they were just a big online operation that knew how to use all these social interactions, like Facebook and YouTube, but that they knew how to use the new technology to recreate an old kind of small 'd' democratic politics. It may have started on the computer, but it almost always ended with a knock on the door, somebody going to someone's house and saying, 'Would you vote for us?'"

Just before his speech, Dionne sat on a panel at Allegheny's new Vukovich Center for Communication Arts. Before a capacity crowd,

**"I think you are in a position to create change in this country in a way that no generation has done since that World War II generation."**

Dionne and other panelists discussed the role of the media in the 2008 election. Other media representatives were Mark Naymik, political reporter for *The Plain Dealer*, Cleveland; Tom Waseleski, editorial page editor at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*; and Jacqueline Policastro, news anchor at WSEE-TV, Erie. Courtney Bailey, an assistant professor of communication arts at Allegheny, moderated.

Panelists offered their insights on the election and how it affected their respective regions. They discussed how regional perceptions of candidates conformed to or differed from the images of the candidates on a national scale.

Another separate roundtable discussion that day centered on political activism on college campuses. Student editors from seven colleges/universities—including Allegheny, Penn State (main), Youngstown State University, Grove City College, Gannon University, University of Pittsburgh, and Edinboro University—participated in the event. ●



**Above:** Four panelists offered their frank insights on the 2008 election during the Full Disclosure event. Shown (L-R): WSEE-TV anchorwoman Jacqueline Policastro, Cleveland Plain Dealer reporter Mark Naymik, syndicated columnist E.J. Dionne, and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Editorial Page Editor Tom Waseleski.

**At top:** E.J. Dionne delighted a standing-room-only crowd at Ford Chapel during his visit to Allegheny College. (Photos by Bill Owen)



## ON-CAMPUS EVENTS

# Hot Shots of the 2008 Election

BY MARY SOLBERG

Sarah Simmons flew from one end of the country to the other, eating “rubber” chicken at Lincoln Day dinners for days on end. For a while, she was paid peanuts for long days and nights on the campaign trail, enduring the often insufferable egos of politicians and consultants.

“What has kept me doing that for more than a decade?” Simmons, 34, asked a captive Allegheny College audience last spring. “Without a doubt, it is the very important impact I believe my work has on the direction our country is heading.”

Simmons discussed her experiences as a campaign worker at “Hot Shots of the 2008 Election,” a daylong conference sponsored by the Center for Political Participation April 2. The event featured a group of young professionals—some of whom are Allegheny graduates—who worked in the key battleground states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Maryland and New Hampshire. They presented a series of workshops on such topics as direct mail, grassroots organizing, finance and law, and campaign commercials.

Simmons delivered the day’s keynote lecture at the Tippie Alumni Center, endearing the young crowd with a frank discussion of life on the campaign trail. She cited her most recent experiences as strategy director for 2008 presidential candidate, Sen. John McCain, and as deputy strategist for California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s 2006 re-election campaign.

“I never knew that I liked complex word problems—like one train leaves L.A. at 8 a.m., going 33 miles per hour and one leaves Sacramento at 7:45 a.m. going 57 miles per hour. When will they collide? The fact of the matter is, in campaigns, you are constantly in a process of trying to solve this kind of a problem,” Simmons said. “Every day, we decide

what to say, and what that means we are not saying. Every day we decide what to spend money and resources on, where to send the candidate, what not to spend money on and where not to send the candidate... The story is always changing, so are the resources and circumstances. That excitement is what keeps your brain engaged and excited.”

The campaign trail can take you on a journey of a lifetime, Simmons added. She has worked on projects in Albania, Malaysia, Mongolia and Montenegro, all developing democracies, where she has done everything from train political activists to debate with leaders of the Islamic party. She advised Allegheny students to get

**“The story is always changing. That excitement is what keeps your brain engaged and excited.”**



**Above:** Ashlee Rich ’05 served on a panel discussion during the Hot Shots event at Allegheny. Rich is a senior research analyst for the Tarrance Group.

**At top:** Featured speaker Sarah Simmons, standing at far right, talks briefly with Adam Fogel ’06, Sebastian Sobolev ’09, and Christina Walrond ’09. (Photos by Bill Owen)

involved in political campaigns, but remember the cardinal rule: “Don’t buy a couch.”

“Take the job that is someplace you might hate. Apply for the job with more responsibility, even if you aren’t sure you can do it. In the meeting where you’ve been listening and not speaking, speak up when you have something that adds to the discussion. Your voice matters.”

Jason Torchinsky, who along with Simmons was named a “Rising Star of Politics” by *Campaigns & Elections* magazine in 2007, also came to Allegheny for the Hot Shots event. As a partner with Holtzman Vogel PLLC in Virginia, he offered a workshop on campaign finance and election law. He also served on the day’s panel discussion, titled “Impact and Implications: The Role of Youth in Campaign Consulting.”

Other participants in the Hot Shots event were:

Jon Black—RNC field operative working with several U.S. Senate races; a 2006 Allegheny graduate

Dan Conant—North Country field coordinator for the New Hampshire Democratic Party; a 2007 Allegheny graduate

Adam Fogel—Right to Vote director of FairVote, Center for Voting and Democracy, Takoma Park, Md.; a 2006 Allegheny graduate

Ryan Meerstein—Ohio state director, John McCain 2008; a 2003 Allegheny graduate

Ashlee Rich—Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani’s polling director, now working as a senior research analyst for the Tarrance Group; a 2005 Allegheny graduate

Ben Swanekamp—Legislative analyst, New York State Senate; a 2008 Allegheny graduate. ●

## POLITICS ON CAMPUS

Some notable politicians visited Allegheny College during the 2008-09 school year.

As a public service to the citizens of Crawford County, the Center for Political Participation worked with Allegheny's Conference and Event Services to host U.S. Senator Arlen Specter's town hall meeting on campus Oct. 1, 2008. Specter met with constituents at the Tippie Alumni Center, fielding questions on various issues important to the region. Only six months later, the long-term Republican senator announced that he was becoming a Democrat. "I find it indispensable to stay in close touch with the people of Pennsylvania in order to do as good a job as possible in representing them," Specter said on his visit.

On Oct. 28, 2008, only a week before Election Day, Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell and Edward Kennedy Jr., the eldest son of the late U.S. Senator Edward "Ted" Kennedy, stumped on the Allegheny campus for then-presidential hopeful Barack Obama. The pair met with students, faculty, staff and members of the Meadville community at a rally in the Campus Center lobby. The event was free and open to the public. The political rally was another test of the CPP-initiated Soapbox Alliance policy that seeks to end the practice of closed campaign events at campus facilities nationwide. According to its member institutions, the Soapbox Alliance insists that college campuses be open to civic discourse, especially during intense political campaigns.



Another member of the renowned Kennedy clan visited campus on April 13, 2008. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., shown at left, an environmentalist, activist and attorney, delivered a speech at Shafer Auditorium on "Our Environmental Destiny." Kennedy's lecture capped Allegheny's Year of Health, a campus-wide effort to examine various aspects of how health intersects with our lives

on a personal, community and global scale. His visit was sponsored by the Year of Health, the Dean's Office, the CPP, Creek Connections, and private gifts.

## BORDER AND SICKO PROMPT CAMPUS DISCUSSION

BY CHRISTINA WALROND '09 AND RICHARD SHAFRANEK '10

The Center for Political Participation sponsored two thought-provoking films on campus this past school year.

The film *Border*, the conservative documentary by Chris Burgard, investigates the state of our southern border with Mexico, featuring interviews with Border Patrol agents, illegal immigrants, Minutemen, politicians, representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union and local ranchers.

Political Science majors and members of the on-campus Union Latina club, among others, attended the film. A brief discussion regarding the merits of proposed immigration policies followed the film.

The other documentary film, *Sicko*, was shown in February as part of Allegheny's "Year of Health."

Interested students filled Henderson Auditorium at Quigley Hall. Many in the audience were visibly moved by the content of the documentary, released in 2007 by American filmmaker Michael Moore.

*Sicko* investigates the American health care system, focusing on its health insurance and pharmaceutical industries. It compares the for-profit, non-universal U.S. system with the non-profit universal health care system of Canada, the United Kingdom, France and Cuba.

Immediately following the film, students remained to watch President Barack Obama's televised address to a joint session of Congress.

## SHEA GOES TO SLOVAKIA

CPP Director Dan Shea traveled last spring to Slovakia as an Endeavor Fellow of the Global Liberal Arts Alliance.

The Great Lakes Colleges Association appointed Shea a short-term visiting fellow to the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (BISLA) in Slovakia. He traveled there for one week last May to provide assistance in the design and implementation of faculty development programs that focus on interactive and non-lecture pedagogy.

"There are very few liberal arts colleges in Europe. Mostly the educational style is what I call 'walkin'-talkin'-sittin'-and-gettin'," Shea explained. "I found that they're anxious to try new methods of teaching."

While in Slovakia, Shea met with faculty, students and administrators of BISLA on ways to implement effective teaching practices. Many people, he observed, were eager to learn about student-centered classroom projects and how to incorporate debates and discussions in the classroom.

As the first recipient of the Endeavor Fellowship, Shea is hoping to see more interaction between American and European schools of higher education. In fact, the CPP at Allegheny College is actively pursuing funding that will help it work with other European liberal arts colleges on effective teaching methods.

Richard Detwiler, president of the Great Lakes Colleges Association, points to the Global Liberal Arts Alliance as a way to bolster the sharing of ideas. As he said, "The Alliance's strength derives from expertise- and experience-sharing, and its emphases are on the challenges and opportunities facing institutions that educate graduates for citizenship and leadership in the highly globalized 21st century."

Shea has dedicated his career to discovering and implementing innovative teaching methods that better engage students. As part of the launch of his textbook in American government, *Living Democracy*, Shea was asked by its publisher, Pearson Education, to conduct teacher-training programs across the country in the spring of 2007.

# MODEL CAMPAIGN USA INSPIRES STUDENTS

Ben Pearson, a graduate of Wilmington Area High School in New Wilmington, Pa., doesn't know exactly what he'll take up in college yet, but he may have gotten some direction when he and his friends won a top award at Allegheny College on April 29, 2008.

Wilmington students captured the "Best Campaign" award and "Best Direct Voter Contact" at Model Campaign USA, an annual program sponsored by Allegheny's Center for Political Participation. The program features a mock campaign in which area high schools compete to see whose fictitious candidate wins.

included: Meadville Area High School, Meadville; Hickory High School, Hermitage, Pa.; Rocky Grove High School, Franklin, Pa.; Grove City High School, Grove City; and Fort LeBoeuf High School, Waterford, Pa.

The schools broke up into teams to run the campaign of an imaginary Republican candidate in a race against a fictitious three-term incumbent Democrat representing the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of New Jersey. Among other things, the participating schools devised press releases and used the Internet—including Twitter and YouTube—to promote their candidate.



*More than 100 students from throughout northwest Pennsylvania met at Quigley's Henderson Auditorium last spring for the annual Model Campaign USA program hosted by the CPP. (Photo by Bill Owen)*

"It was just a great feeling that we can come together like this and accomplish such a goal like we did," Pearson said after his team won. He's leaving open the possibility of majoring in political science.

Mary Beth Acker, their teacher, proudly added that her students have won the top award once before.

"I love bringing my kids here; it has always been a wonderful event for us," Acker said.

More than 100 students and teachers from regional high schools converged on Allegheny for the event. Besides Wilmington, other schools

Student fellows of the Center for Political Participation judged the schools in various areas, including polling, fundraising, direct voter contact, press and public relations, and their use of the Internet.

Fort LeBoeuf teacher Paul Cousins brought his students to the mock campaign for the first time. They walked away with two awards: Best Targeting and Best Ethical Standards.

"My kids can't wait to come back next year," Cousins said. "Now that they know how this works, they're eager to return."

*continued on next page*

## MODEL CAMPAIGN, *continued*



CPP Fellow Sebastian Sobolev '09 talks about MCUSA strategies with Wyatt Schroeder '09.

Besides campaigning, the students got a chance to attend a luncheon with Mari Mullen as the keynote speaker. Mullen, the wife of Allegheny College President James Mullen, discussed her own political activism and challenged the students to make a difference. "Go out. Be passionate," she advised.

In 1988, Mari Mullen served as field director for Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis'



High school students met in small groups at MCUSA.

presidential campaign. After Dukakis' failed bid for president, she continued working for him in his education and press offices.

But Mullen's interest in politics started early, with her mother having been the first woman mayor of Bangor, Maine, as well as having been elected a state representative. Mullen's father also served as mayor of Bangor. "That's where I found my passion for politics...at home." ●

## Model Campaign Award Recipients

Fort LeBoeuf High School  
*Best Targeting, Best Ethical Standards*

Grove City High School  
*Best Electronic Media*

Hickory High School  
*Best General Strategy*

Meadville High School Team 1  
*Best Polling, Best Press Relations*

Meadville High School Team 2  
*Best Internet Campaign*

Rocky Grove High School Team A  
*Best Public Relations*

Rocky Grove High School Team B  
*Best Fundraising*

Wilmington Area High School  
*Best Campaign, Best Direct Voter Contact*

## CPP TREKS TO HARVARD



Bill Purcell, director of Harvard University's Institute of Politics, greeted 2009 CPP fellows Elizabeth Andrews '09, far left, and Christina Walrond '09 at the IOP's "Advocating for Change" conference last spring. (Photo by Mary Solberg)

Elizabeth Andrews and Christina Walrond, both student fellows with the Center for Political Participation and members of the Class of 2009, joined CPP Program Coordinator Mary Solberg at "Advocating for Change," a two-day conference last April at Harvard University's Institute of Politics.

The April 3-5 conference, sponsored by Harvard's National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement, generated thought-provoking discussion among colleges throughout the country. Students considered ways to increase civic/political involvement through hands-on public advocacy projects.

Marshall Ganz, a Harvard lecturer in public policy and a recognized civil rights organizer, challenged students to mobilize their communities. He likened the current economic times to momentous occasions in the past, including President John Kennedy's call to public service, and the 1972 law giving 18-year-olds the right to vote.

"Take responsibility to enable others to achieve purpose in an age of uncertainty," Ganz told a morning session. "Inspire hope in place of fear."

Allegheny and 19 other colleges and universities throughout the country are members of the National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement. ●

## CPP Hosts Mock Debate

A mock debate between presidential hopefuls Barack Obama and John McCain—represented by Allegheny political science majors—was held at Seton Elementary School in Meadville on Oct. 16, 2008. Wyatt Schroeder '09 acted as then-Senator Obama, and Grant Rozich '09 played Senator McCain.

Seton students asked questions about everything from the current U.S. financial crisis to global warming, life issues, health care and education.

"I can't say enough for the Allegheny kids. They connected with the students here," said Mari Mullen, wife of Allegheny President James Mullen. The couple's daughter, Franki, and their son, James, were in attendance.

Mari Mullen attended the debate along with her mother, Mary Sullivan, and her godmother, Jane O'Hern, both of Boston.

Laura Blake, who teaches sixth- and seventh-grade language arts and social studies at Seton, was instrumental in bringing the mock debate to Seton. The entire school of 157 students from pre-school to eighth grade had been examining the presidential election process.

"I thought the Allegheny students were especially able to develop a spark with our students," Blake said. ●



Wyatt Schroeder '09, left, posed as then-Senator Barack Obama, and Grant Rozich '09 played Senator John McCain in a mock debate at Seton School in Meadville before last year's presidential election. About 45 fifth- through eighth-graders excitedly asked questions. (Photo by Bill Owen)

## ALLEGHENY CONTINGENT LOBBIES FOR FUNDING

College students from throughout Pennsylvania converged on the state capitol in Harrisburg on March 24, 2008, for the annual Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AICUP) Lobby Day.

The focus of this year's event was Gov. Ed Rendell's proposed higher education funding. Last February, the governor proposed the Pennsylvania Tuition Relief Act, which would legalize video poker in Pennsylvania to



The capitol building in Harrisburg served as a picturesque backdrop on Student Lobby Day. Left to right are: Amy Negley '09, Dave Kleppick '11, Kevin Brazda '12, Jacob Vite '10, Chris Plano '12, and Sam Rigotti '10. (Photo by Nina Kasniunas)

provide tuition relief to students attending the state's community colleges and state-owned universities. The governor's proposal did not acknowledge

low- and moderate-income students who attend state-related and private colleges and universities, like Penn State University or Allegheny College.

Nine Allegheny students, along with Political Science Professor Nina Kasniunas, attended the spring event under the auspices of the Center for Political Participation. Although the contingent supported Rendell's proposal to an extent, they lobbied state legislators to create equitable funding for students who attend private colleges like Allegheny.

"Many of the state's private colleges and universities participated in this lobby day, but Allegheny had by far the busiest lobbying schedule, having set over 14 appointments with state legislators," said Kasniunas, who served as Allegheny's Lobby Day advisor last year.

The Allegheny contingent met with House Minority Whip Mike Turzai, Senate Majority Whip Jane Orie, along with Sen. Bob Robbins of Pennsylvania's 50<sup>th</sup> District, and Pennsylvania Rep. Brad Roae of the 6<sup>th</sup> District.

"In tight budget years like these, those who don't speak don't get what they need," Kasniunas said. "The legislators were impressed with the professionalism and knowledge of the Allegheny students."

The Allegheny students in attendance were: Kevin Brazda, Morgan Finton, Dave Kleppick, Amy Negley, Christopher Plano, Dave Pucalik, Chris Seeley, Sam Rigotti, and Jacob Vite.

At press time, the governor's budget had been approved, but funding is still pending to a number of private colleges and universities. Funding is being held up pending the final resolution of the gaming issue. ●

# CPP Fellows 2009-10

**They're the grease that makes the CPP wheels turn. "Every year I think we have the best team of student fellows and then they graduate and we get another group that's every bit as good," says CPP Director Dan Shea.**

**Since its founding in 2002, the CPP has had 30 fellows. Three more joined the illustrious group for the coming school year. Without them, the CPP's pioneering strategies that promote youth political involvement would not occur.**



## **MAYA BROD '10**

Maya is a senior majoring in political science, with a minor in communication arts. From Rockville, Md., she is interested in politics and current affairs, particularly in the Middle East. Besides the CPP, Maya is president of Allegheny's Hillel and is a member of the International Club. She believes strongly in environmental protection and universal healthcare. Last summer, Maya took three political science courses at Georgetown University.



## **WENONAH ECHELARD '12**

Wenonah is a sophomore planning to major in political science, with a minor in French and Spanish. Before college, she attended Minnesota Girls State and was governor of the Minnesota Model Legislature. Wenonah recently traveled to India through the Allegheny

College Experiential Learning program. At Allegheny, she plays flute and piccolo in the Wind Symphony, Wind Ensemble, and is a member of Kappa Alpha Theta. At home in Winona, Minn., she is an assistant at Price, McCluer & Plachecki Law Firm.



## **MATT LACOMBE '11**

This is Matt's second year as a CPP fellow. From Cleveland, Ohio, he is a double major in political science and economics. Matt is a member of the Gator cross country and track and field teams, as well as a Distinguished Alden Scholar. He recently helped his team take first place in the Early Leaders Case Competition at the University of Rochester's Simon Graduate School of Business. After his graduation from Allegheny, Matt hopes to attend law school.



## **JERAMIE PARKER '11**

Jeramie is a junior majoring in political science, with a

minor in religious studies. From Middletown, Md., he competes in Allegheny's varsity cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track teams. Last track season, he achieved the status of All-American in the 1,500 meters by finishing seventh in the nation. He soon will be a three-time Academic All-American. Last summer, he worked for the Defense Security Service (DSS), part of the Department of Defense. In DSS, he worked in Foreign Ownership, Control, or Interest (FOCI).



## **RICHARD SHAFRANEK '10**

This is Richard's second year as a CPP fellow. From Chardon, Ohio, he is pursuing a double major in English and political science with a minor in biology. He is a writing consultant at the Learning Commons and pens a weekly political column for *The Campus*. Also, he serves as program director for Allegheny's radio station, WARC 90.3 FM.

# Follow the Fellows...What They're Doing Now

**MATTHEW GIEG '03**

J.D., Capital Law School; Gieg Law Offices

**DAVID SEELEY '03**

Regional coordinator, New York State Assembly

**ANNE SHOUP '03**

Research assistant, Center for American Progress

**BREANNE ELLEN ATZERT '05**

J.D., Cornell Law School; Associate at Jones Day

**ALLISON BARR '04**

M.P.P., George Washington University; Policy analyst, Achieve

**TRACIE GAYDOS '04**

J.D., Villanova University School of Law

**ANGELA MARIE JACK '04**

Partnership coordinator, Urban Assembly Academy of Civic Engagement

**CHARLES DANIEL MYERS '05**

Ph.D. candidate, Princeton University

**SARA ANNE SCHMITT '06**

Project manager/Implementation consultant, Epic

**SHANNON MARIE SCOTECE '04**

Ph.D. candidate, SUNY Albany

**JOHN STEVEN SIMON '04**

Communications coordinator, United Way of Erie County

**ADAM S. FOGEL '06**

M.A., George Washington University; Right to Vote director, FairVote

**MEGAN A. MCCLEAN '05**

M.Ed., Pennsylvania State University; Assistant director, Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, Department of Education

**JORDAN PALLITTO '06**

MSPPM, Carnegie Mellon; Management consultant, The Hill Group

**DOMINIC P. RANDAZZO '05**

MPA, Syracuse University; U.S. Foreign Service Officer, Haiti

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**HAVE AN UPDATE?** The CPP asks former fellows to update their contact information by e-mailing the CPP offices at [cpp@allegheny.edu](mailto:cpp@allegheny.edu).



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# FORMER FELLOWS: TWO EXPERIENCES

AFUA S. OSEI '08

## Malaysia changes world view

What is the favorite sport of all Americans? Can you tell us about the prom? What are American teen-agers like? Do you eat rice in America? Are there Muslims in America? Do you know Barack Obama?

These were just some of the questions I had been asked while living the past year in Terengganu, Malaysia. Every time I left my apartment, I instantly became an encyclopedia of knowledge about all things American. My official responsibility as a Fulbright Scholar was to improve the communication skills of the students with whom I worked in this small part of the Muslim world. Unofficially, I was helping them to form a more international outlook and expand their viewpoint.

The U.S. State Department, through the Kuala Lumpur embassy and its cultural affairs officers, wanted Fulbright scholars to subtly soften America's image abroad. When I first arrived in Malaysia about a year ago, Israel was bombing Gaza and anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiment was running particularly high in my host community. Even though I saw several "boycott American and Israeli products" signs around Lembah Bidong High School, where I taught, the first thing my students wanted to know was if I had a boyfriend and whether or not I attended a prom like they had seen in "High School Musical 3." While I'm not sure how much their English improved by watching YouTube music videos of America's Best Dance Crew or by fixing them chocolate chip pancakes in my apartment, I know for sure that I was able to build relationships that transcended language,

religious, cultural, and age differences. Instead of being an imperialistic American with a funny way of spelling and speaking, I became "Ms. Afua," their crazy English teaching assistant who loved music, dance, and forcing students to practice their public speaking. I introduced them to things like kettle corn popcorn, Twizzlers, and spelling bees. They taught me to become more patient with a bus system that ran on its own schedule, eating rice for every meal, and praying five times a day.



*Former CPP fellow and Fulbright Scholar Afua Osei poses with Aquila, one of her sophomore students in the rural town of Terengganu, Malaysia. (Contributed photo)*

In all honesty, things weren't always peachy at my school. I was the only American among 750 Malays and the language and cultural differences of office politics oftentimes created difficult situations. I lived by myself; one hour away from any other Americans or grocery store. Without my own vehicle, taking public transportation with no set schedule often resulted in hours spent waiting along the roadside. As a vegetarian, my food options significantly dwindled to pasta or white rice. If there were vegetables available,

it was a great day. No bookstores, no movie theaters, no coffee shops. My favorite sit-down restaurant with air conditioning soon became Pizza Hut. In a futile attempt to fit in, I wore the traditional Malaysian outfit: baju kurung, a long-sleeved tunic and long skirt, and the tudong, the headscarf worn every day by Muslim women. As an African-American woman in Malaysia, there was no way I could disguise that I was different. I wasn't living in the glitzy Malaysia depicted in the brochures and travel commercials; I

was living in a rural community that still resembled the Malaysia of 50 years ago ... without cable television.

Although I would have enjoyed cable television and could have done without the lizards that always found their way into my house every night, Fulbright provided me with the opportunity to move to a new country, become totally immersed in another culture, and still have time to travel to more than 10 countries throughout Southeast Asia. If you add in the scuba diving, parasailing, snorkeling, and water skiing at some of the best islands in the world, the experiences were totally worth it.

Terima kasih Malaysia dan SMK Lembah Bidong untuk pengalaman yang menarik dan setiap masa yang diluang kan bersama. Translation: Thank you, Malaysia and Lembah Bidong High School for a great time and wonderful experience.

Next stop: Who knows? President Obama might need someone to translate a Malaysian or Indonesian document. Thanks to Fulbright, I'll be ready to go. ●

**Editor's Note:** Afua Osei completed a seven-month Fulbright Scholar teaching assignment at Lembah Bidong High School in rural Terengganu, Malaysia. In January 2010, she begins an internship in First Lady Michelle Obama's Correspondence Office at the White House. A former CPP fellow, she is a 2008 graduate of Allegheny College where she double-majored in political science and black studies.

## New York State rife with opportunity

Right after graduating from Allegheny in 2008, I was deployed on my first political race: the New York State Senate campaign of Rochesterian Rick Dollinger. A native of western New York and an active politico myself, I was a natural fit for the New York State Democratic Committee. Expectation was high at the possibility of flipping the state senate for the first time in more than 40 years.

Dollinger was an ex-senator forced out of office by redistricting in 2002. Drafted by former New York Gov. Elliott Spitzer the year before, Dollinger was a great candidate with a lifetime of public service and legal expertise. The district was predominantly democratic, and because of his previous time in office, he enjoyed high name recognition. We would be squaring off against Joe Robach, the son of a popular and powerful Democratic assemblyman, who had switched parties to enjoy the luxuries of life in the Republican majority.

Initially, I was hired as a bread-and-butter organizer. During the day I recruited volunteers, compiled data, and made phone calls to seniors. At night I knocked on democratically friendly doors all over the district, asking for support and, if possible, volunteer time. Very basic field politics. Field is not as glamorous or sexy as press, or even as interesting as fundraising, but it is important. Building early relationships with the community would lay the groundwork for the campaign's expansion in the fall.

Later, I received my first promotion. For whatever reason, the campaign manager took a shining to me and decided to promote me into

a leadership position. From there, I took an active role in planning and executing the field operation. This meant more responsibility, and even more hours. Everything from opposition research, database management, and photo editing fell onto my plate. One of my more interesting experiences was scouting locations and talent for a series of campaign commercials. For filming, I had to locate everything from businessmen to vacant factories to construction workers. By early October, the campaign was



*Ben Swanekamp '08 is shown standing here during a workshop he gave at Allegheny College last spring.*

in full swing and we were feeling confident that against all odds Dollinger could beat the incumbent.

Then, an unfortunate twist. A long-term upstate Democrat was facing an unusually strong challenge; polling had him down 13 points. I was asked to leave the Dollinger campaign and start up a field operation for our incumbent. During four brutal weeks of 18-hour days, the rapidly growing campaign slowly turned the tide. By latching onto the tremendous momentum of the Obama campaign, and emphasizing the change

a Democratic majority would bring to New York, the campaign overcame a double-digit deficit to win 52 to 48. It was a tremendous moment made bittersweet by Dollinger's defeat.

Following the election, I took the traditional month-long, post-campaign vacation that young operatives refer to as "funemployment." I used this time to work the many contacts I had met over the course of the election season. I eventually found more permanent employment with the New York State Senate. Having worked

the political side of the equation, I decided to take a swing at legislative work. In my current capacity as a legislative aide, I analyze pending legislation, meet with concerned parties and advise the senator with whom I work on pros and cons of a bill. I've worked on everything from a bill allowing free beer samples to a bill that requires handguns to imprint microscopic traces on spent shell casings.

All of this work was brought to a screaming halt when two democratic senators went rogue just days before the end of the legislative session, typically the busiest time of the year. The media aggressively latched onto the story, indiscriminately blasting dems and repubs alike for failing to "get back to work." Articulating the complexity of the situation and our ongoing negotiations became another important part of my job. After a month of bitter negotiations, the dissident democrats have come back into the fold, restoring our hard-fought majority. What will happen going forward remains to be seen, but general public dismay with the New York State Senate will greatly complicate my job. 2010 will be an interesting year. ●

**Editor's Note:** Ben Swanekamp is a legislative analyst with the New York State Senate. He is a 2008 graduate of Allegheny College, having majored in political science.

# Dahlkemper's Upset Win

BY DANIEL M. SHEA, *Allegheny College*  
AND STEPHEN K. MEDVIC, *Franklin & Marshall College*



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is an excerpt from "All Politics is Local...Except When It Isn't: English vs. Dahlkemper in Pennsylvania's Third Congressional District," by Daniel M. Shea and Stephen K. Medvic, which appears in *Cases in Congressional Campaigns: Incumbents Playing Defense*, edited by Randall E. Adkins and David A. Dulio (Routledge 2010). The book is available at [www.routledge.com/9780415873888](http://www.routledge.com/9780415873888).

## THE SETTING

Pennsylvania's Third Congressional District sits in the northwest corner of the state. The district extends from Lake Erie south to Butler and Armstrong counties and at its southernmost point is roughly 20 miles north of Pittsburgh. Though 42 percent of the district is rural, there is also a significant industrial influence, particularly in the district's major city, Erie, which is Pennsylvania's fourth most populous city. The result is a district that is more blue-collar (30.7 percent) than the rest of the state (25.2 percent) and one with a median income (\$35,884) of roughly \$4,200 less than the state as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Politically, the district leans Republican. In 2000, 51 percent of the voters in the Third District supported George W. Bush as did 53 percent in 2004. In both cases, Mr. Bush's vote totals were five percentage points higher in the Third District than were his statewide totals. Though Erie and Mercer counties are predominantly Democratic, the Democrats in this district are relatively conservative. The combination of conservative, blue-collar voters with rural voters explains the Republican tilt to the district, but also suggests an opportunity for Democratic candidates in the mold of Senator Robert Casey, Jr.; that is, those who are economically progressive and socially conservative.



**Above:** The race for a seat to the U.S. Congress from Pennsylvania's 3rd District was particularly intense last year. Then-Congressman Phil English, left, debated his Democratic opponent, Kathy Dahlkemper, at Allegheny's Ford Chapel on Oct. 8, 2009. (Photos by Bill Owen)



**At top:** CPP fellows Matt Lacombe and Elizabeth Andrews interview Kathy Dahlkemper, far right, just hours before she was elected in 2008 to the U.S. Congress representing the 3rd District of Pennsylvania. (Photo by Mary Solberg)

## THE CANDIDATES

### PHIL ENGLISH, THE INCUMBENT

Republican incumbent Phil English was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1994 by a narrow victory in which he garnered just under 50 percent of the vote.

Perhaps in response to a reelection contest in 2006 that was closer than it should have been, English's voting record became noticeably more moderate in the 110th Congress. His American Conservative Union

(ACU) scores dropped (that is, became less conservative) to 64 and 52 in 2007 and 2008, and his Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) scores rose (or became more liberal) to 40 and 65. His party unity scores also fell to 78 percent and 82 percent in 2007 and 2008, and he supported President Bush only 50 percent and 44 percent of the time in those years, respectively.

Following the 2006 midterm elections, English hoped to enter the ranks of Republican leadership in the House.

To do so, he made a bid to

become chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). Though that bid was unsuccessful, English was tapped to chair an NRCC task force devoted to erasing the campaign committee's \$14.4 million debt.<sup>2</sup>

Outside observers, such as a few local political scientists and several of the beltway handicappers such as Charlie Cook, seemed reluctant to tag English as vulnerable at the outset of the 2008 campaign. He was smart, aggressive, well-positioned on key committees, well-financed, and a moderate in a moderate district. The Cook Political Report, for example, suggested the Third District was “solidly Republican.”

### KATHY DAHLKEMPER, THE CHALLENGER

Kathy Dahlkemper was the first woman from northwestern Pennsylvania ever elected to Congress in her own right (not filling a spot held by a deceased husband)....[I]t is difficult to pin Kathy Dahlkemper's background into categories common among successful challengers. For one, she had never held public office prior to running for Congress. She never expressed any interest in public life prior to 2007. In fact, she rarely spoke in public forums (letter to the editor, open city council meetings, etc.) about a public policy question, nor had she been a robust supporter of any other candidate or public figure. No one in her immediate or extended family could be called “political” and she was not the sponsored candidate of any prominent public official.

Nor was she wealthy, ready to conduct a robust self-financed race, as is generally the case with successful challengers. She and her husband, Dan, own a landscaping business, with about ten employees during peak seasons. There was no significant pool of resources from which Dahlkemper expected to draw. Nor was she a principal figure in business circles. The Dahlkempers were known and respected in the Erie business community, but there is little evidence that Kathy or Dan were leaders in that realm.

In short, Kathy Dahlkemper did not have a political base, a pool of resources to draw upon, a sponsor, or a deep connection to the local party organization. And her candidacy was not driven by a pressing issue or an ideological agenda.

So how did her background help defeat an entrenched incumbent? What resources was she able to draw upon? For one, she had a much larger base than most outside observers understood. Her deep community roots sprang from an intimate tie to the Erie Roman Catholic Diocese. She and her family faithfully attended church and through the decades Dahlkemper had taken on numerous leadership roles in the church. The most important of these activities was her position as a marriage encounter coordinator.

The Erie Diocese, as with most Catholic dioceses across the country, regularly holds marriage encounter weekends for parishioners. As coordinators, Dan and Kathy Dahlkemper steadily broadened their network of intimate friends—not mere acquaintances, but dear friends. They were known and well-liked throughout northwest Pennsylvania. This created a steadfast base of supporters that any local elected official would covet. And unlike the followers of most politicians, Dahlkemper's base was bi-partisan; many of her Catholic friends were conservative Republicans. Thus, by the time she was gearing-up for her campaign, Dahlkemper was better known than each of her primary election opponents even though they were elected officials and/or leaders in the Erie legal community. We might say that her strength sprang from a veiled base, rather than an overt group of partisan supporters.

There is one other resource that may have proved quite helpful. Jim Murphy, a veteran of New York State electoral politics, once commented that the No. 1 characteristic in successful challengers is the steadfast commitment to winning. “When you are looking for challengers to back,” noted Murphy, “the depth of their conviction says as much as anything. Successful challengers have a big heart, and are not afraid to show it.”<sup>3</sup> By all accounts, Dahlkemper was this sort of candidate.



*Then-U.S. Congressman Phil English met after the debate with the executive board of the Allegheny College Republicans. Shown, left to right, are: Megan McNally '11, Rebecca Sorensen '09, Derek Dye '10, Dan Donahoe '11, and Brandon Tirpak '09.*

### THE CAMPAIGN

ENGLISH: DEFINE  
DAHLKEMPER AS “WACKY”

Phil English's reelection strategy had remained essentially the same through the years: take care of the district; make sure voters see you around; amass a huge war chest; and define the opposition early in the campaign so that they could never recover. Money from outside groups, a critical part of most challengers' campaigns, would sit on the sidelines. On the night that Dahlkemper won the Democratic primary, English was candid about the route to victory he would take in 2008: follow the path of prior campaigns.<sup>4</sup>

But things took a different turn. For one, English's vote total in 2006, against Stephen Porter, was surprisingly small—just 54 percent. Porter was a weak candidate with very modest resources (netting about \$81,000 for his 2006 race). This, combined with a growing sense that Republicans were out of favor nationally, led to a hotly contested primary election on the Democratic side. That is to say, many Democrats smelled blood in the water and were itching for a chance to challenge English.

Most significantly, English's efforts to define Dahlkemper did not seem to work. English's strategy to label her as a "radical liberal," the approach used against Porter, did not seem to resonate because Dahlkemper was pro-life, pro-gun, and a small business owner. Having few policy-centered lines of attack, several early negative ads in support of English, which were sponsored by the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), suggested Dahlkemper had "wacky" environmental ideas.<sup>5</sup> One ad even featured a dogsled, suggesting that if his Democratic opponent had her way few would have gasoline to drive cars. There is little evidence that this worked. As noted by one of Dahlkemper's campaign operatives, "The polling hardly moved, and our positives remained much higher than English's throughout the course of the campaign."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, English's strategy of offering himself as the moderate, common-sense alternative—even if voters were not crazy about his party—stalled. By early fall it was clear that the English team understood this and a new approach was floated. During the first debate, held at Allegheny College in early October, English outlined the new strategy in his opening statement. "This district," he said, "needs a change, and I intend to be the agent of change."<sup>7</sup> He went on to suggest that only those who understand the complexity of the legislative process, the ins-and-outs of Congress, could bring meaningful change to the district. ...But it seemed rather odd coming from a 14-year incumbent who originally ran for Congress supporting term limits.

#### DAHLKEMPER: "YOU KNOW ME!"

Early polling showed the race close—with Dahlkemper perhaps a few points ahead of English. Unlike most challengers, there was no hill to climb for the Democrat—but instead a lead to maintain. Surprisingly, the results of this poll were released to the media and reported on in June; they showed that Dahlkemper had the support of 41 percent of likely voters, English at 40 percent, and 19 percent undecided.<sup>8</sup> But outside money continued to hedge their bets and wait on the sidelines.

Early on, the Dahlkemper campaign focused on building the candidate's credentials and local ties. A series of "bio" mailings and television spots focused on her community roots and her experience as a mother and small business owner. The message was simple: You know Kathy Dahlkemper; she's one of us. "I had connections with people from all over the district—through my life," noted Dahlkemper.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps concerned that their opponent would slowly rise in the polls as the election drew near, or maybe as a means to offset the attacks being leveled against their candidate, near the end of the summer the Dahlkemper campaign shifted to attack ads against English. Generally, this was a two-pronged approach. First, in keeping with the theme many Democrats employed across the nation, the idea of "change" was pushed by the candidate. Second, a series of attack ads sponsored by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) suggested English was more concerned with protecting "special interests" and "Wall Street speculators" than with protecting the residents of northwest Pennsylvania. When pressed to explain the

overall strategy of the Dahlkemper campaign, another staffer suggested it was "all about fight[ing] off attacks and keeping our lead." Also, "Kathy was much more popular than most of us understood. The attack ads didn't stick because they [the voters] knew her."<sup>10</sup>

Dahlkemper's strategy also focused on geography. As noted above, the voting in the Third District leans Republican, but it varies greatly from one county to the next. They understood that if they could carry Erie County,

roughly 50 percent of the district, by a large margin and hold their own in the other Democratic county, Mercer, they could pull it off. (This proved to be a wise route, as she won Erie with nearly 57 percent of the vote and Mercer County with nearly 52 percent, but lost every other county.)

Finally, it is likely that Dahlkemper benefited from support among women voters. The nuances of identity politics are complex and hard to fully discern when exit polling is unavailable, but it is clear that Hillary Clinton was quite popular in the 3rd CD, especially among Democratic women. In the congressional primary, held the same day as the presidential primary, the margins of victory for Clinton and Dahlkemper were highly correlated throughout the district. Did this carry over to the general election? It is hard to say. But in a year when "change" dominated the political landscape (an issue discussed in greater detail below) Dahlkemper, the first woman candidate for Congress from this area in decades, seemed to fit the bill.



*Kathy Dahlkemper garnered an upset victory and became the only woman to ever be elected to the U.S. Congress from Pennsylvania's 3rd District. She is shown here with CPP fellow Richard Shafraneck '10, and Olivia Lang '11.*

## LESSONS LEARNED

Incumbents lose—but not often. The conventional wisdom is that English got caught up in the national anti-Republican tide. All politics is local, except when it is not (we might say). He was an attentive, active representative, but he could not weather the storm against his party and the backlash against George W. Bush. Phil English had no choice but to play defense.

There is some truth to the conventional wisdom, of course. It is likely that Dahlkemper would not have entered the race if she and others in the district did not perceive a powerful national tide. She calculated that there would be a boost for any Democratic candidate. The strategic candidate model, first advanced by Jacobson and Kernell (1983)<sup>11</sup>, played out in the fall of 2007. As two other scholars noted, “Strategically sophisticated challengers carefully judge the vulnerability of their opponents...”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the contention of Maisel, Stone, and Maestas (2001)<sup>13</sup> that strong potential candidates are vastly more likely to run when they see a good chance of winning seems to have played out in this race.

And outside groups might not have been able to bolster Dahlkemper’s efforts if the Democratic advantage had not been as big as it was in 2008. Because there was more energy and excitement among Democrats than among Republicans, the Democratic Party and its allies were flush with money. With more money to spend than their opponents, the Democrats could compete in more races than could the GOP. So the national tide had very practical implications for the resources available on the challenger’s side of this race.

But did voters kick their 14-year incumbent out of office simply out of a desire for change? Did Barack Obama’s message trickle down to northwest Pennsylvania and did his coattails pull Dahlkemper along? Perhaps. But one should bear in mind that Barack Obama lost the Third Congressional District of Pennsylvania. He carried Erie County, but was badly beaten in all of the other counties (though he performed better than John Kerry had done in nearly every part of the district). Indeed, Dahlkemper ran ahead of Obama in some counties. In Butler County, for instance, Obama received

35.7 percent of the vote, compared to Dahlkemper’s 48.1 percent.<sup>14</sup> Many scholars have found only modest evidence to suggest a direct connection between national tides and local voting trends.<sup>15 16</sup> Additionally, if the tide was so strong, how did some Republicans stay afloat? Again, English was a competent, moderate legislator.

Another explanation might be that English ran a poor campaign. Ed Brookover, the former political director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee and regional political director of the Republican National Committee, once noted, “There is nothing more pleasing, from the point of view of a strategist, than to work against an incumbent who runs the same campaign again and again.”<sup>17</sup> (Shea and Brooks, 1995, 24). English surely began his campaign against Dahlkemper the same way that he had confronted other opponents. When that did not work, his campaign appeared to panic and flailed from strategy to strategy until it ended up with a terribly inconsistent message.

The most likely explanation contains elements of each. There was a tsunami against all GOP candidates and English was in trouble even before the Democratic primary. But his team probably surmised that they could survive by relying on their ability to use hefty resources to define the opponent. This would keep outside Democratic money on the sidelines and push voters to see Dahlkemper as too risky. The problem was that attacks on Dahlkemper did not stick. She was too well-known and respected in the district. Over nearly two decades, she had broadened her community roots into a solid foundation. She was a political neophyte, but a known neophyte. As months passed and Dahlkemper maintained her strength, her campaign caught the attention of the DCCC, AFSCME, and other contributors. This outside money was critical in helping to neutralize English’s last-minute media blitz.

The core lesson of the race, then, is that national trends can shape local contests. But alone they cannot determine the outcome of these races. Other factors such as the quality of the candidates and the effectiveness of their campaigns also matter. For an incumbent free of scandal or controversy to lose, all of these elements must be present. In the Third Congressional District of Pennsylvania in 2008, they were. ●

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