

U.S. Congressman Phil English speaks to Behrend students

by Liz Hayes
news editor

United States Congressman Phil English, who is up for re-election on the Republican ticket, was scheduled to present his lecture "Speaking Up for Education" at Penn State Behrend on Wednesday, November 1. However, as he was unable to leave Washington, D.C., in time for the event, he voiced his views and answered questions over the phone, and his wife, Chris, came in person to further present English's platform to those in attendance.

The rally, sponsored by Delta Sigma Pi (Behrend's international professional business fraternity), began promptly at 7:00 p.m. with a presentation by Vicki Snyder, English's campaign manager. Snyder, an alumus of Behrend,

began by apologizing for the congressman's inability to attend. She explained that Congress could not recess for the year while not yet in agreement with President Clinton on a national budget. Apparently this is the first time since World War II that the Congress has been delayed this long - they were to have been done by October 29.

Snyder also provided some basic background information on English while waiting for him to call. English represents the 21st district of Pennsylvania in the United States Congress. This district includes Erie and parts of Crawford, Mercer, and Butler counties, extending almost to the Pittsburgh area. Snyder was also very enthusiastic about having college students vote, regardless of whom they decided to vote for.

Just as Snyder was finishing her introductory remarks, the phone

set up on the corner of the stage rang, indicating English was on the line from his office in D.C.. His wife, Mrs. Chris English, walked into the Commons at the same time. Mrs. English came up on stage and took her place behind the podium, where she would remain for the rest of the event. Snyder proceeded to answer the phone, which was hooked up to a microphone so that the audience could hear what was being said. The sound quality was not at the best level, but English's voice was intelligible.

English began his remarks to the audience by again apologizing for his absence and thanking everyone for their "patience in a very weird arrangement." He also reinforced Snyder's comments to vote in the upcoming election. He then began to enumerate some of the items on his platform. Key issues mentioned included education - he supports increasing the Pell Grant, expanding educational savings accounts, and providing tax breaks for college students; Social Security - he would like to increase the rate of return on social security benefits by having individuals invest a portion of social security money in real assets; and jobs and technology - which he hopes will be expanding in northwestern Pennsylvania.

The floor was then briefly opened up to questions from the audience. Questions included how the Congressman responded to negative advertising, how out-of-state college tuition rates could be made more affordable, what he thought of the Second Amendment, whether or not China should be allowed into the World Trade Organization, and what his opinion of the Palestine/Israel situation was and how he thought the U.S.

should handle it. Afterward, he thanked the audience again, and turned the microphone over to his wife.

Mrs. English reaffirmed her husband's commitment to education, as well as informing the audience of her involvement in the Erie Public School System, especially with the Gifted Program. She stated that her husband supported limiting the control the national government has over education, thereby giving local districts greater mobility and freedom. "What we don't need is a federal government dictating what local educators need to do."

At the conclusion of Mrs. English's short address, Snyder came back to the podium to conclude the night's presentation. She then invited Jerry Knight, English's local chief of staff, on stage. Knight, also a Behrend alumus, concluded by mentioning voters in the 21st district.



PHOTO BY LIZ HAYES



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Vicki Snyder, a Behrend alumus and Congressman English's campaign manager, stands beside the telephone while English spoke to the audience from his office in Washington, D.C.

Representative Phil English's wife, spoke to Behrend students on Wednesday, Nov. 1, because the Congressman was unable to attend. Mrs. English informed the audience of her and her husband's involvement with the Erie Public School System. She said that English does the same thing independently on her own basis and not strictly for the Republican party's platform.

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