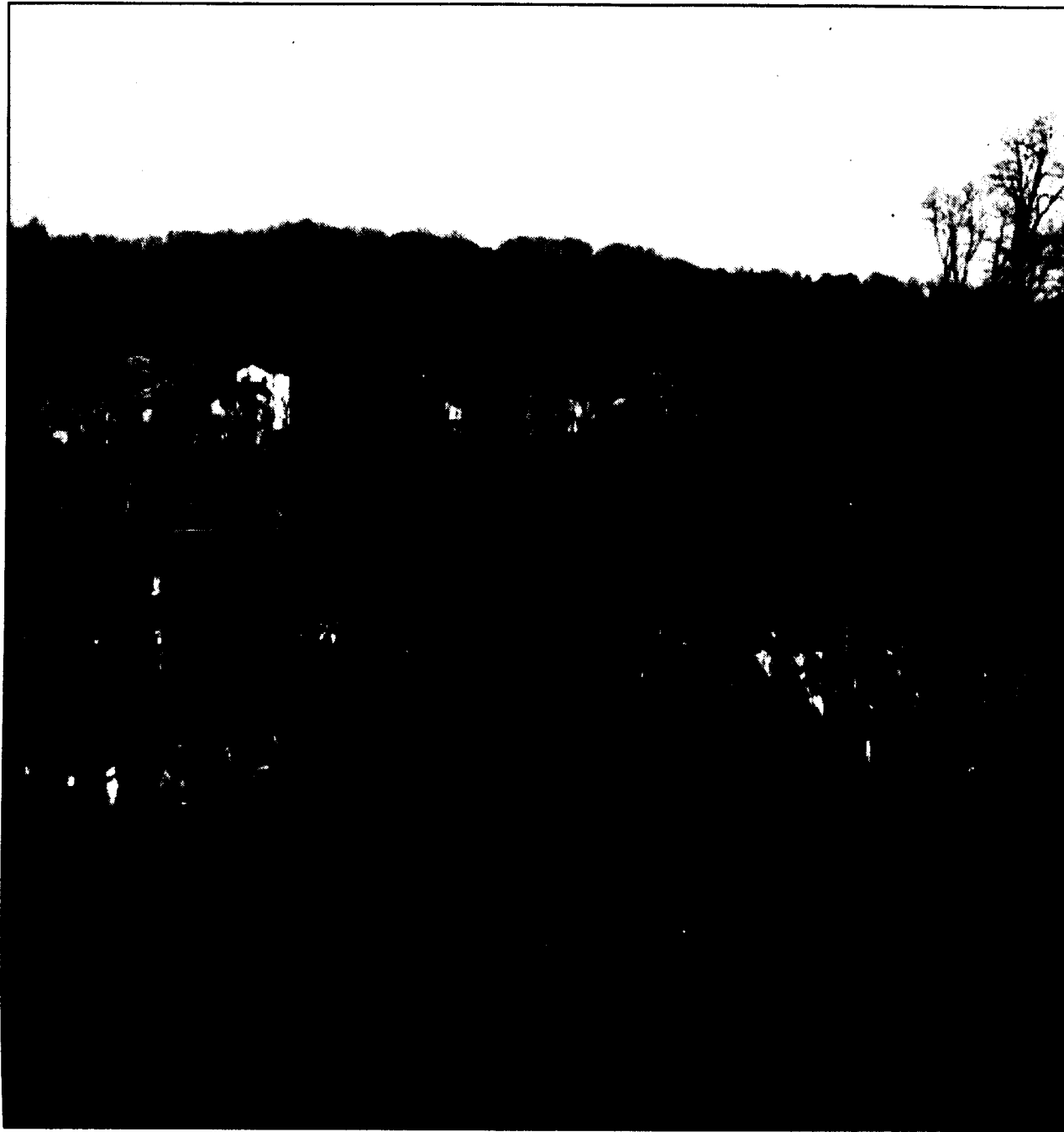


SPECIAL PRIMARY COVERAGE

Push and shove pay off for Behrend College Democrats



The line of Obama supporters stretched from the Junker Center doors all the way to Station Road. Keegan McGregor/THE BEHREND BEACON

By Rachel Reeves

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Although Senator Obama announced his rally at the Junker Center less than three days before his arrival, it took Behrend organizers months of campaigning to secure the event.

Since Behrend cannot invite a presidential candidate to come speak, recognized groups and clubs within the college have to take the initiative. The College Democrats started the process after Greg Stewart, Pennsylvania co-chair of the Obama campaign, came to speak to them in November. Since then, Josh Synder has been working with the local Erie group alongside Paul Witt, President of the College Democrats. "We've been passing out stuff on campus, we've been working with the local community," said Witt, describing months of on-campus campaigning for Obama.

Student enthusiasm seemed to play a large role in bringing Obama to campus. Ted Kennedy, after his visit on Monday, was impressed with the turnout he received and the overall support for Obama on campus and in the Erie area. Some suspect that Kennedy came solely to gauge voter interest in Obama. Obama's advance team arrived with Kennedy and began contacting people with Behrend's administration, like Director of Student Affairs Ken Miller and Director of Student Activities Kris Torok.

Although Kennedy's visit has close ties with Obama's, the simultaneous Clinton appearances are pure coincidence as opposed to political strategy. The two campaigns did not know that the other would be there until it was announced to the public. They contacted Behrend at almost exactly the same time - Torok was actually on the phone with the Obama campaign Tuesday night when someone from Hillary's cam-

paign walked into her office. The Clinton campaign confirmed only a few minutes before the Obama campaign.

Behrend was not notified until around 5:00 on Tuesday night for either Bill or Obama.

Obama's team only considered two venues in Erie: the Erie Bayfront Convention Center and Behrend's Junker Center. Obama prefers to rally at colleges, since his stance resonates more with student voters, and Behrend was the clear choice of the other schools in the area. Gannon made clear months ago that they cannot host a liberal candidate because of their strict involvement with the diocese. The Mercyhurst campus would be a good venue except for the fact that they hosted Senator Hillary Clinton only two weeks ago.

The Junker Center is much smaller than the convention center, but this was actually more appealing to Obama's campaign. A smaller format serves a town rally, question and answer setting better. "It's going to be a little bit more inclusive," said Paul Witt.

Dr. Robert Speel, associate professor of political science at Behrend, offers some perspective on Obama's visit. Speel said that it was a "tactical mistake on part of [Obama's] campaign" to hold off on visiting Erie for so long. Obama probably believed that Erie was like other small cities in Pennsylvania and that most voters would lean conservative. However, Erie democrats tend to be more liberal than those in the southwestern part of the state.

However, Speel said, Obama will more than likely be able to make up for lost ground tomorrow. Since Erie residents are finally getting a chance to see Obama, they will probably forget the left-out feeling experienced when northwestern Pennsylvania was not included in the Senator's bus tour of the state earlier this month.

Clinton drums up support for Hillary Security tight for Obama visit

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college more affordable, and a way to bring the men and women serving our country home safely.

He said that she believes to create more jobs in this country, we need to focus more on going green. He said her plan includes the increase the amount of solar and wind energy, and make buildings greener because these are jobs you cannot outsource.

"The second reason you should vote for her is because she is the only candidate that will give you a plan that will provide affordable health that will cover every single, solitary American," President Clinton said.

As he asked the crowd to raise their hands if they knew someone without health insurance the majority of the crowd did so. "This is no wealthy nation on Earth where you would get that response," he said. "This is no other wealthy country where this question would be asked because everybody else has a system to cover everyone and that enables them to save money."

Under Sen. Clinton's plan, the former President said, Americans would have the opportunity to buy into the same plan that ensures employees of the federal government and members of Congress.

"If it's good enough for our family, you should have access to it," he said.

President Clinton's third pitch for his wife was on

college affordability. "She is the only candidate that has ever done anything to make college more affordable and her plan will enable every young American who finishes high school to get at least two years of education," he said. "And everyone that wants a four year degree to get it and that is in America's economic self interest. We have to do that."

President Clinton explained that his wife's plan would be to raise the Pell Grants every year to keep up with inflation and more than double the tuition tax credit from \$1,600 to \$3,200 per student a year. He also said, "[She will] crack down on the abuses of the private loan companies that are charging 14, 16, 18 percent. It's wrong."

"She's the only personal that actually have a plan to end this home mortgage crisis," President Clinton said. Her plan, he said, is if the homeowner has been making all their payments, the homeowner can stay in the house at the same mortgage rate for the next five years.

President Clinton also touched on Sen. Clinton's plans to reform trade agreements and her plan to produce a way to pull out of the Iraq War safely.

"I would still be here, even if we had never been married," President Clinton said. "Obama is a good speaker, but Hillary has empowerment."



Former President Bill Clinton waves to onlookers as he leaves Erie Hall. Daniel Smith/THE BEHREND BEACON



The secret service stands outside of Erie Hall with President Clinton. Keegan McGregor/THE BEHREND BEACON

By Jennifer Juncosa

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Early Wednesday, April 16, Obama's visit was merely a rumor to the students and faculty of Penn State Behrend. Students, faculty, and volunteers started the process of preparing for the presidential candidate to have a town hall meeting at the Junker Center 48 hours later.

Barack Obama's visit requires intense preparation that includes

setting up security, closing the Junker Center, telling the student body of his visit, and handing out tickets.

Obama's visit was planned to come to a college campus but with Hilary Clinton having gone to Mercyhurst and Gannon not wanting to start a conflict, Penn State Behrend was his destination. Paul Witt, President of College Democrats, said, "We're hosting the event, when they come on a campus they look for a

group to sponsor them and naturally we were the group to do that." Due to the hard work of the College Democrats, Penn State Behrend was able to distribute 250 tickets and Obama '08 stickers to the students interested in attending.

Informing the student body was challenging with the short notice. The line of students, much longer than the amount of tickets that could be distributed, was what brought in most of the students due to the mass email taking longer than usual to announce Obama's visit. After the shortage of tickets able to be distributed, it was important to keep the student body updated. The Behrend Beacon has set up to have live blog updates, live video, and detailed coverage of the political events over the past week and Obama's rally that will be updated and information up until the primary election Tuesday April 22.

Barack Obama's visit to Penn State Behrend has the attention of Police and Safety, Erie County police, and Obama's secret service. Prior to admission, the Junker Center had to go through a security sweep with Obama's Secret Service and a police dog. Attendees had to go through a mini version of Airport security that included bag searches, random spot-checking, metal detectors, and attendees having to be searched with security wands. Those attending to see Obama speak were unable to be in possession of apples, bananas, unsearched bags, and most signs. All press with Credentials through Obama's Campaign had to go through security wand searches and all bags needed to be searched by the police dog.

Despite all the security precautions taken by Police and Safety, area police, and Obama's secret service, the event occurred without any serious treats to security.