

LOCAL AND NATIONAL NEWS

Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) holds town hall Q&A meeting with Erie citizens at Blasco Library

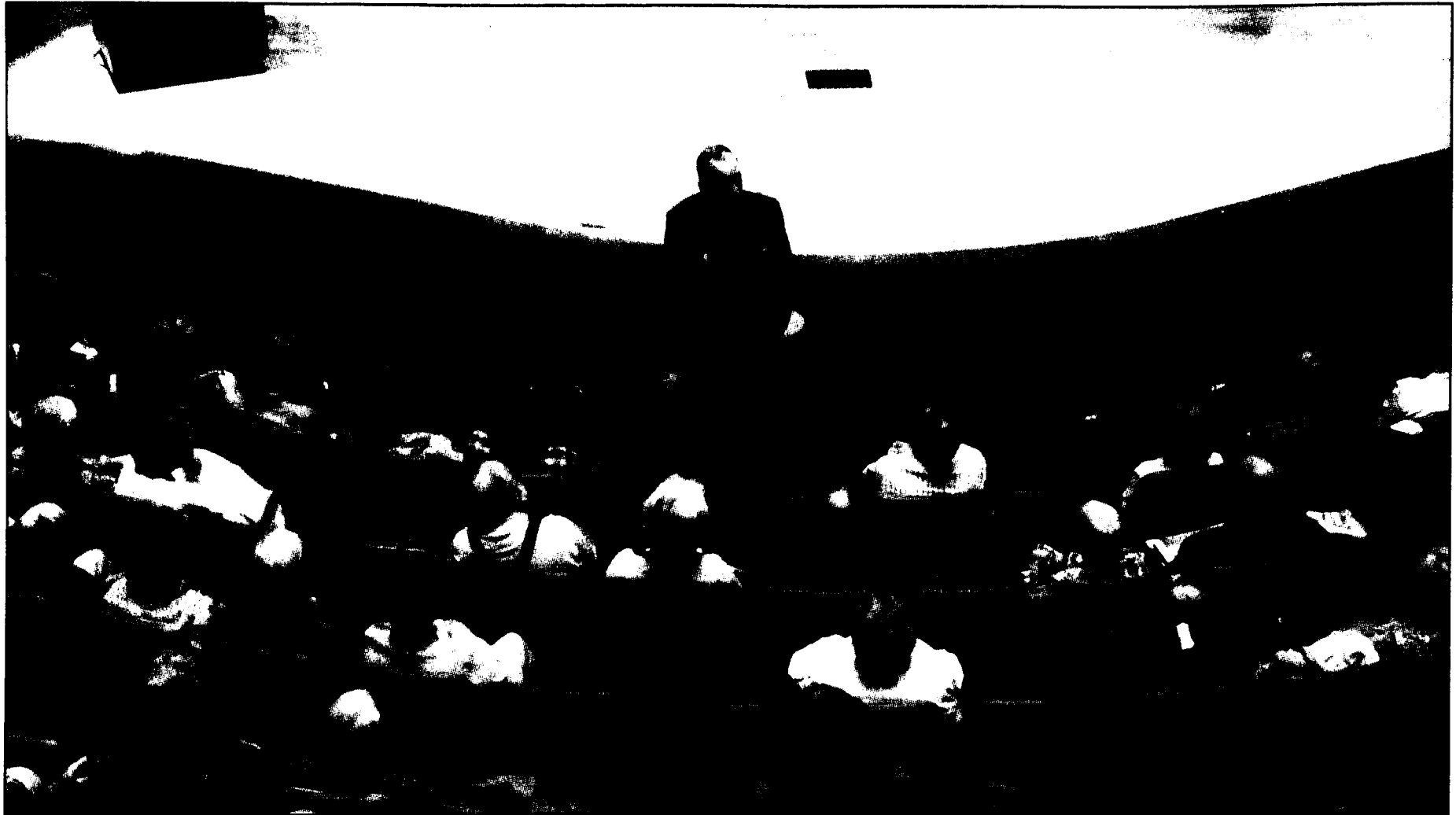
By Connor Sattely
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Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) held a town hall meeting Wednesday afternoon at the Raymond M. Blasco Memorial Library in Erie, trying to calm fears and obtain feedback from constituents in the midst of tough economic times.

While local politicians and office holders such as State Senate hopeful Cindy Purvis made an appearance, Specter took the stage after a brief introduction by Erie mayor Joseph Sinnott and spoke alone for a half hour before taking questions from attendees. Specter insisted that the main point of the town hall meeting was to keep in touch with the citizens that he represents.

"These meetings provide me an opportunity to give you a brief report on what's going on in Washington," Specter said. "Or, more fundamentally, to find out what is on your minds."

On the minds of the majority of the speech's attendees seemed to be the economy, and the grim job market faced by many people trying to enter into a career. The \$700 million bailout, passed by Congress last month, raised ire amongst many who believed that the bill contained too much "pork." When a frustrated woman demanded answers as to why the bill was passed with these earmarks included, Specter asked that Americans keep in



DANIEL SMITH / The Behrend Beacon

Specter opened the forum to attendees (above) and answered questions on a number of issues (right).

mind the urgency of passing the bill.

"My staff was on the job the entire time," he said. "I asked that the Senate take their time – read and analyze everything, hear witnesses, cross-examine them – and they short cut it." The reason for the short cut, said Specter, was that when the House

of Representatives voted on Sept. 29 the market went down 700 points.

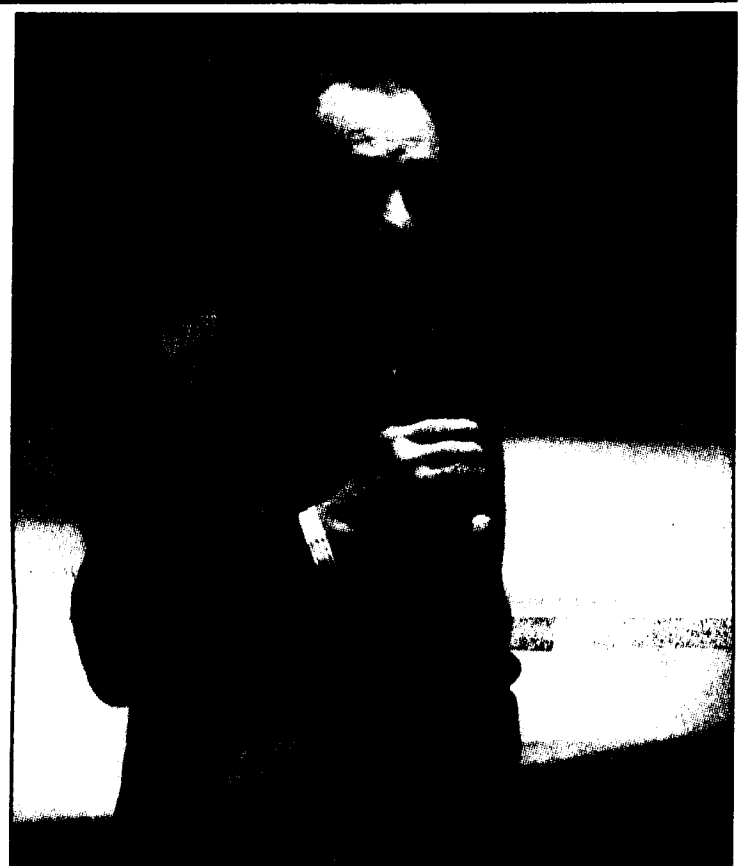
"We came back from [Rosh Hashanah] and had to vote right away. Had there been amendments, that pork would not have been in there. But, we were backed against the wall out of concern that if we didn't act, it

would have been worse."

Healthcare was another major concern for many who attended, including an elderly woman who informed the Senator that she needed a heart transplant and "fell into a gap" amongst workers without healthcare. "I pay my taxes," she said, "and am glad to do so. I'm not looking for a hand-out from the government, but I find this very much against who I am as an American citizen. What can the government do to change these kind of issues?"

Specter's response was to promise the woman that his office would do its best to help her individually, and to assure the crowd that healthcare remained a concern in Washington. A member of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the Senate for 23 years, he reminded attendees that he had "crossed the aisle" several times to sponsor bipartisan medicare reform.

Specter, who in 2005 became Pennsylvania's longest termed Senator in his fifth appointment, also spoke regarding college students. He responded to one student's concern that as a Republican in a typically Democratic area his vote would not matter. "Does your vote matter? The answer is yes. With enough people voting in one



way, you can enact change. If everyone has the view that their vote doesn't count, nobody votes, and nothing changes."

In an interview with *The Beacon*, Specter acknowledged that funding for college students must remain a priority in the midst of tough economic times. "I think [the economy] is going to rebound," he said. "If you study hard, if you work hard, you can find a good job." When asked if helping students make

their way through college retained its importance, Specter said that the problem may lay with the universities.

"We need to call on the universities not to [raise tuition] above the inflation rate," he said. "I've heard a lot of college students who are worried about their loans, and we have to keep the loans coming. We don't want to have any interruptions in students' educations."



DANIEL SMITH / The Behrend Beacon

Specter has served in the United States Senate for 28 years.

THE BEHREND BEACON

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Behrendstock closes Flashback Fridays with a bang

Being a hippie, I couldn't resist when I heard that the Lion Entertainment Board was putting on something called Behrendstock. The two bands performing were Hot Rocks and Hard Day's Night, a Rolling Stones cover band and a Beatles cover band.

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Lady Lions defeat Hilbert Hawks

The Lady Lions ate the Hilbert Hawks for dinner during the soccer game on Wednesday at the Behrend Fields. The score was a sturdy 2-0 with Behrend ahead during the first half and added five goals to total seven. At the end of the game the score was 7-0 which left the Lions with a spotless victory.

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Who are you calling a socialist?

After months of scattered and uneven messages on the campaign trail, John McCain and Sarah Palin have finally found their voice, or at least that of 'Joe the Plumber.' Like "Remember the Maine" and other rallying cries of yesteryear, "Remember Joe" has become a central theme of the campaign, a rallying cry to incite the masses, but devoid of any substantive points.

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