

Students and faculty show support for 2008 elections

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A discussion on politics, race, gender, advertising, and congressional elections. What could have been just another night on CNN was a special evening for Penn State Harrisburg. On Monday, March 3 a lecture featuring PSH's own professors began the evening at 5:30 and a presentation by Lindsey Berman of Rock the Vote followed.

Mark Singel, a Democratic activist and former Lieutenant Governor, began the discussion by sharing his opinions on the most popular topics of the 2008 elections. Singel first stated how "exhilarating" he found these elections because of the "sheer competence" of both sides. He drew a few laughs when he joked that this election will not be like the previous two, where 240 million people voted and we ended up with George W.

When Singel briefly discussed the Republican party's candidates, he remarked that all the men running were great candidates, but joked that Ron Paul was probably the exception. Singel stated his respect for McCain and his war heroism and also asserted that McCain is the most practical candidate for the Republican party, "whether the far-right goofballs accept him or not".

Singel's excitement was noticeable as he commented on the Democratic party. His discussion took place mainly around the two "rock-stars" of this election, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. While Singel mentioned that he got to know the "Bill and Hillary duo", he didn't mention Hillary Clinton much.

Obama is still holding his lead in the delegate counts, which is just fine with Singel. Senator Barack Obama is an "absolute phenomenon" in Singel's opinion. He gushed that Obama has charisma and style that America has not seen since Robert F. Kennedy. Singel then apologized for "sounding like a groupie". Singel supports Obama because he believes Obama has the better chance for greatness and feels that

the momentum of his campaign will continue.

Professor Harold B. Shill, a professor of Public Administration, followed Singel discussing the importance of congressional elections. Shill began his lecture by outlining past congressional patterns. From 1955 to 1994 Congress was dominated by Democrats, but from 1994 until 2006 there was a Republican revolution. As many of us surely remember, there was a Democratic resurgence in 2006.

Shill discussed current Senate and House of Representative states and mentioned the impact of the 2008 congressional elections. In the Senate, there is currently a 51-49 Democratic majority. Twenty-two Republicans and 12 Democrats are up for re-election in addition to five Republicans retiring, and three Senators currently running for the presidency. These circumstances leave 43 seats in the Senate up for grabs. In the House of Representatives, there is currently a 233-202 Democratic majority and all 435 seats are up for re-election.

Another topic on Shill's agenda was the importance of Pennsylvania's congressional elections, which will also occur in 2008. In Pennsylvania, there are 19 Congressional Districts whose representatives make up the PA Senate and the PA House of Representatives. Shill says voting in these local elections are just as, if not more, important as the presidential election, because our votes determine either a divided or a unified party government. Obviously a divided party government will accomplish less than a unified party government.

Professor Carol Nechemias, who teaches Political Science and Public Administration, followed Shill and spoke about the role of race and gender in politics, particularly as they related to the current election. Nechemias began her lecture by asking and discussing a common question, "Is America ready for a woman president?"

To demonstrate the political value of being a man, Nechemias quote

Ronald Reagan who said, "Margaret Thatcher is the best man in England." In recent years, there has been a major upswing of willingness to vote for a woman from their party. Nechemias showed a variety of statistics proving the idea of a woman president is much more accepted today than 10 years ago.

The idea of a black male president, however, looks more probable when

affected Hillary?), and being Muslim. Advocating change in Washington, serving in the military, and having experience in Washington were the top three items on the "nice" list.

The final presenter of the lecture was Professor Matthew Woessner, who also teaches Political Science and Public Policy. Woessner's presentation was on political advertisements and their emotional

keep you from voting altogether. As an example, Woessner showed a few ads from 2004 that compared George W. Bush to Hitler. These ads also demonstrated his next point: that some negative ads can go too far and actually create sympathy for the target.

Negative ads are full of exaggerations and manipulations of facts, or "emotional nonsense," as Woessner put it. His advice is to be aware that a negative

political advertisement doesn't likely tell the whole or real story. Woessner encouraged everyone to keep these s l e a z y, negative ads from working; watch ads carefully, and think about who deserves your vote.

Professor Steve Peterson, a professor of politics at Penn State Harrisburg, moderated this lecture. A question arose from the audience a b o u t potential Vice Presidents, whether there

Photo courtesy of google.com

ROCK THE VOTE

looking at statistics about America's readiness for a black President. Nechemias also pointed out that research shows women and blacks are more skeptical of their own race or gender's likelihood of election.

Nechemias also discussed desirable and undesirable traits in political candidates. Under the "naughty" list were being 70+ years of age (Watch out, McCain.), doing drugs in the past (Uh-oh, Obama.), having an extramarital affair (Could Bill's

impact. Political ads aim to charge you with emotion; even ads that contain information manipulate it so that it will affect you emotionally. Woessner expressed his disgust for the emotional vote and encouraged everyone to think before they vote.

Woessner also declared his love for negative ads. "They make me smile," he admitted. Unlike other emotionally charged ads, negative ads manipulate you emotionally to

was any possibility of Obama and Clinton working together. To this question, Peterson replied that the VP is no longer a passive role; the VP has become much more active lately, so the ability of the President and Vice President to work together is increasing important. The likelihood of Obama and Clinton being able to work together is doubtful, Professor Shill added.

Lindsey Berman, visiting from Washington, D.C., then presented

a Rock the Vote presentation at 7:00. Rock the Vote is a nonpartisan organization that was founded in 1990. It targets the youth vote and reaches youth by speaking familiarly, relating issues, going to where the youth are located (most currently, online), and launching large-scale media campaigns utilizing partnerships like Facebook, MySpace, and MTV. Rock the Vote's goals for 2008 are to register two million voters.

Berman discussed the factors that make Generation Y different from previous generations, like 9/11, the Internet and different technologies, Hurricane Katrina, and reality television. All these factors make youth not only the most diverse generation, but also youth are more likely to volunteer and pay attention to the world around them.

The main goal of Berman's Rock the Vote presentation was to reach youth and let them know their vote does make a difference. In fact, it can be the difference in a close election, which she proved by showing Obama and Clinton data.

Berman encouraged everyone to register to vote, which you could do there, and to be sure to vote on Election Day. Pennsylvania primaries are April 22, 2008 and the deadline to register was March 23. Berman also promoted reaching out and registering peers and friends. When I asked Berman how she personally reaches out to youth, she responded that she carries voter registration cards with her.

She also suggested sending out a mass text message reminding friends it's Election Day. Berman mentioned that she changes her Facebook status on Election Day, hoping it will remind someone to vote.

To register to vote, just visit the Rock the Vote website at www.rockthevote.com and look for the link titled "Register to Vote". It will take you through the painless process of registering to vote and afterward, you'll be able to let the government know what you think! The evening ended in an upbeat fashion; youth left feeling empowered and hopefully inspired to vote.

In case of emergency

CART teaches people what to do when they are in trouble

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Penn State Harrisburg's Community Assessment and Response Team (CART) already scheduled town hall meetings, but when news of a former PSH student's conviction for threatening to copy the Virginia Tech shooting broke and a shooting occurred at Northern Illinois University a couple days later, they felt the need to move the town hall meetings sooner, said CART member and PSH Police Chief Kevin Stoehr.

CART, a team of PSH professionals with expertise in various areas including communications, psychological counseling and law enforcement, works to improve campus security by investigating reports of acts of intolerance and potential emergencies as well as advising and exercising emergency plans and procedures.

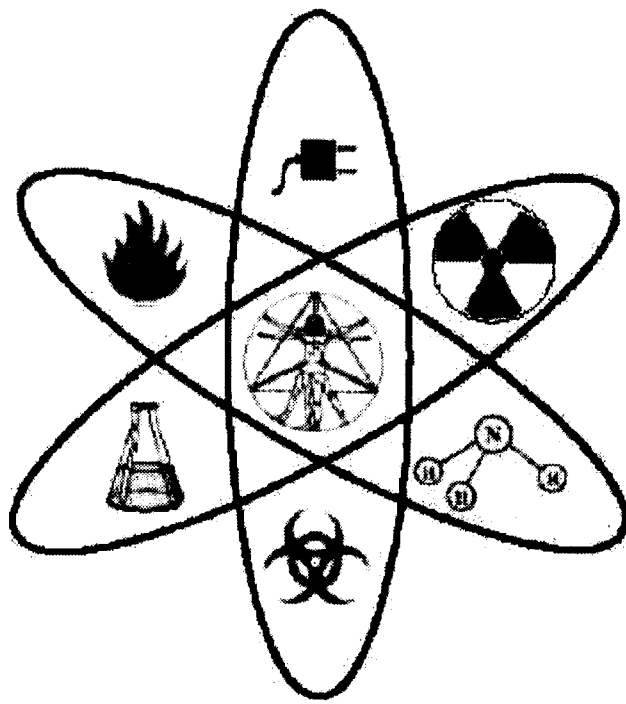
The town hall meetings, held Feb. 18-21, focused on informing students of community safety and available resources and creating an exchange of ideas and comments.

"We want to incorporate (what was learned from events such as 9/11 and the Virginia Tech shooting) into what we do here," said Stoehr at the first meeting.

At the town hall meetings, CART members distributed and went over handouts covering emergency procedures and counseling services.

Representatives from Police Services emphasized the importance of calling 911 instead of the campus police phone number (717-948-6232) or their cell phone number (717-979-7976) in emergencies because there

may not be a person at the Swatara building at all times and police do not always have cell phone reception. Calls made to 911 are more efficient in that they will send an ambulance immediately if necessary and Police Services as well as neighboring police departments are informed over their radio, said Lt. William Gelgot of Police Services.



Stoehr and Gelgot also noted "8" must be dialed first if calling 911 from a campus phone.

Additional information about Police Services and emergency plans are available on PSH's Web site.

Dr. Steve Backels of PSH's counseling department also presented at the town hall meetings, answering questions and informing of the counseling services available and confidentiality procedures. Information on a handout provided about signs of students in distress and potential harm is available at <http://php.scripts.psu.edu/dept/iit/hbg/studentaffairs/counseling.php>.

CART members, other college professionals and students also

discussed problems with the current fire alarm system and drill procedure. Students said some professors would ignore the alarm, continue teaching and refuse to let the students out. They also pointed out that there was no designated location or procedure they were made aware of and that people would crowd just outside the building, dangerously close if there were a real fire.

The new emergency cell phone text messaging system, PSUTXT, was also discussed. Some praised the alert system's efficiency while others noted problems with getting everyone to sign up and check their cell phones. The text messaging alert system informs students not only of emergencies, but of school closings, delays and other important announcements. Students may register at <http://newswires.psu.edu/>.

Since CART was formed about 10 years ago, according to Stoehr in an interview, they have held more town hall meetings and become more proactive, working to improve campus safety and prevent crisis situations.

Recently, the fire alarm system was updated and drills have been planned.

Stoehr added that "full blown" drills including people acting as victims have been discussed.

More recently, all Penn State University campuses conducted a test of the PSUTXT system to determine whether the server could handle the demand, according to a press release.

"The world has called to us to figure how to respond to these things," said PSH Chancellor Madlyn Hanes. "We're thinking always of the next step, of how to get better and better."

RALLY!!!

RALLY @ THE ROTUNDA
APRIL 2

MEET AT THE SGA
OFFICE AT 12PM

E-MAIL MARTY SANTALUCIA
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FOR MORE DETAILS!!

LOWER TUITION!!