

Eye On Campaign

Democratic PA 7th District Candidate Sestak Visits



Democrat, Joe Sestak spoke to students, faculty and staff only a few weeks before Election Day.

By JOHN MILLER

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"I will not make a single stop in this campaign season that means more to me than this one-not one," said former President Bill Clinton on Oct. 12 at a fundraiser at the Valley Forge Military Academy.

It was all for his former National Security Council Director of Defense Policy, Joseph Sestak, who is running for the Pennsylvania 7th Congressional House seat currently held by GOP incumbent Curt Weldon. Weldon is a career politician. He's been this district's congressman since 1986 and before that mayor of Marcus Hook. Sestak grew up in Springfield, PA. He spent thirty-one years in the Navy and retired as Vice Admiral in Jan. in order to run for office. Republicans have a different opinion. They contest that Sestak "very publicly fired".

At Penn State Delco, Joe

Sestak spoke to a crowd Commons Building conference room on Oct. 3rd of students and members of the community. They wondered who this guy was and why does he want to oust Weldon. His answer surprised a lot of them. Sestak began by summarizing his service to his country which included being the director of "Deep Blue", the Navy's anti-terror task force, and commanding an aircraft carrier group at the start of the wars in Afghanistan and later Iraq.

"I'd do it all over again," he remarked.

So most would think that after three decades in the service this man would feel "we the people" owe him a debt of gratitude, right? "My country doesn't owe me. I owe my country," he said.

Vice Admiral Sestak feels that he has a debt to repay to the people that he grew up with in the Delaware Valley. The people he wants to represent saved his five year old daughter Alexandra from brain cancer by paying their taxes. Their civic duty helped supply his first class Navy health benefits which allowed him to bring his daughter to the Philadelphia area to receive the best treatment available.

"I had no idea how fortunate I was. I live with great people and I always intended to come back and serve them," he told his audience.

As far as his agenda for Washington is concerned, Sestak could describe it in just one word: it. That's right. "It" could mean anything, he said. To him, "it" means the four pillars of national security: health security, education security, economic security and defense security. First, he answered many questions about defense including what he thinks of the war in Iraq.

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Economically, the former three star admiral feels the federal government has done very little to combat the fact that the Bush Administration has turned a record \$5 trillion surplus under Clinton into a record \$8.5 trillion deficit in just six years in office.

"We need a cap on discretionary spending," he proposed.

Other startling facts the candidate mentioned revolved around education and healthcare. According to Sestak, health insurance premiums have risen 70 percent in recent years leaving 46 million Americans currently uninsured (15 percent of the population). Also college tuition in Pennsylvania is rapidly rising and Sestak announced a plan that calls for a \$3,000 tax credit to help families pay for their children's "higher education".

Joe, as he likes to be called, concluded his visit by making one thing clear: he thinks Curt Weldon has forgotten who he serves. Despite that accusation he stills has respect for his opponent.

"I have nothing personally against Curt Weldon. I just don't agree with his vote," Sestak said.

FBI Rekindles Rep. Weldon Investigation

By JOHN MILLER

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On Tuesday Oct. 17th, The Philadelphia Inquirer along with many other newspapers across the country broke the story that local PA 7th District Congressman Curt Weldon is under FBI investigation.

The Justice Department issued warrants to search the homes of Weldon's daughter, Karen, and her business partner, Charles Sexton Jr. All six homes were searched in Pennsylvania and Florida. Sexton is not only the top gun of the GOP in these parts but he is also Weldon's campaign manager, at least he was.

The allegations are that Weldon, by using his position as Vice Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, helped his daughter Karen, a 29 year old "powerbroker", gain favors from several Russian corporations, the most prominent being The Itera Group, whose US offices are in Jacksonville, FL.

In September 2002 Weldon put together a benefit for Itera at the Library of Congress to honor its CEO Igor Makarov. Not long after that generous gesture, Itera paid half a million dollars to Karen Weldon's and Sexton's firm.

Weldon's opponent, retired Vice Admiral Joe Sestak has not said much since the public became aware of this inquiry.

"We'll just have to wait and see," a campaign spokesman commented.

Now the strange thing about this whole situation is that these allegations are not new. The Inquirer, for instance, ran a story about this questionable behavior on Weldon's part as far back as two years ago, one of them in February 2004 with "Weldon Backed Causes as Daughter Got Clients" as a headline.

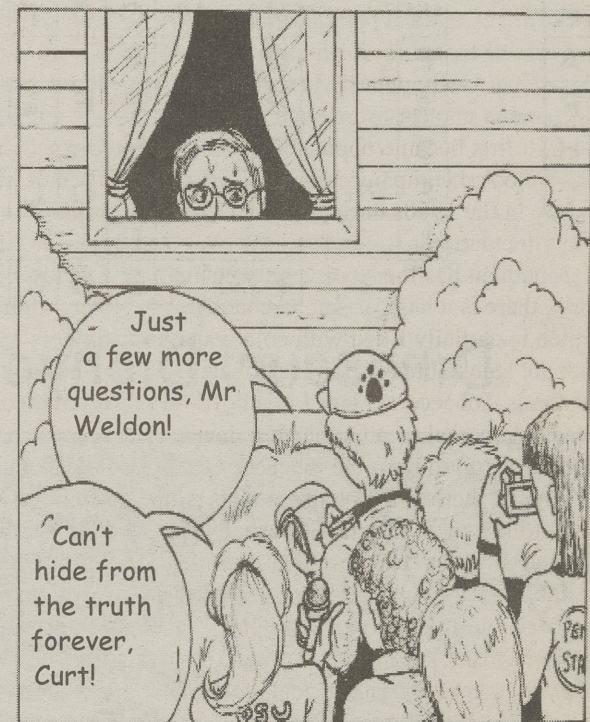
"The stuff I've done with these companies is documented and substantive. I have nothing to apologize for," Weldon said in 2004.

The Republicans' response to the latest allegations has been the same as many prominent issues like terrorism and North Korea; it must be the Democrats who want to gain control of the Congress on November 7th.

"They (GOP) are probably concerned about the timing of this, three weeks before the election, as he (Weldon) is," says Michael Puppino Jr., the new campaign manager.

Weldon's re-election campaign has been hard enough with poll numbers saying the race between him and Joe Sestak is a dead heat, now he's facing possible criminal charges and being in violation of Congressional ethics.

Coincidentally, the day his news made the papers, Weldon was supposed to be here at PSU Delco talking about National Security. He obviously had more important things on his mind.



Art by Christina Felizzi