

# 23rd Congressional District

## Johnson running on past record

By STEVE AUERWECK  
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Albert Johnson is running cool, and no wonder. He has money, he's Republican, and he has 11 years experience in the U.S. Congress behind him.

"I know there's a tendency to poo-poo one's record and seniority in Congress," the 23rd District candidate says, "but after all, I am getting very high up on the rolls of the Congress."

"I think one of the very big issues is do not substitute for a well-seasoned, well-trained person one who would have to start at the bottom of the ladder."

The man Johnson refers to, the one who would have to start at the bottom of the ladder, is Yates Mast, who hopes to return the district's seat to the Democrats in the Nov. 5 election. The district is 61 per cent Republican.

Johnson, a 68-year-old attorney from Smethport, was interviewed following a breakfast speech to the State College Chamber of Commerce last Friday.

Sporting a "Drew Lewis for Governor" button and an American Flag lapel pin, Johnson answered a wide range of questions, including his campaign, the economy and education.

Throughout the talk Johnson stressed the importance of his seniority in securing benefits for the district, and while Mast has said he thinks seniority is "absolutely unimportant," Johnson doesn't think so.

Johnson is second-ranking minority member of the House Banking and Currency Committee and he hurries to point out that the committee "doesn't just supervise banks."

"When Hurricane Agnes hit we passed the Flood Disaster Bill of 1972," Johnson said. "My committee handled it and I worked night and day (for) a \$5,000 subsidy for everybody that was damaged and loans at a low rate of interest. That's just one instance."

Home building and the entire housing

industry also come under the banking committee, Johnson said, calling it "one of the most important in Congress."

The committee is at least important to him. Johnson's contributions from July to August included \$4,900 from two banking organizations and four business executives.

Mast has focused on this, charging indebtedness to vested interests. At the breakfast meeting Johnson agreed that such contributions can look bad, but he said they are necessary to running a political campaign.

Johnson also is third-ranking minority member on the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee, which he said "has been stripped of most of its power by reason of turning the Post Office over to a corporation."

The committee also controls federal employees, and there are few in the district.

"I grant you there isn't an awful lot I can do for this district by being part of that committee," Johnson said. "I was just put on there for balance."

A bill which was rejected by the House on Oct. 8 would have split up the banking committee and completely abolished the Post Office committee. Johnson voted against the measure.

On inflation, Johnson proposes a three-pronged attack — lower federal spending, tax reform and stimulating business to provide more jobs.

Johnson said he supports a new joint Congressional committee to hold the budget within a set limit, and he explains his two-member, one-office staff in the district as a measure to hold down government spending.

His record shows that he has consistently voted to restrict spending on social programs while backing the defense budget, and he holds to that philosophy.

When asked whether he would go along with defense cuts, he exclaimed,

"No, no I would not! The defense budget has only gone up an average of 7 or 8 billion dollars a year over the past seven or eight years, whereas the money for non-defense items, social-type items, has gone up \$92 billion a year."

"Oh, we just can't sleep, can't lull ourselves into a feeling of false security," Johnson said.

Johnson endorsed a 600-page tax reform bill which is due on the House floor after this Congressional recess, saying it will eliminate many of the tax loopholes Mast has attacked.

Johnson said the bill will raise taxes on oil companies by \$3 billion by phasing out the oil depletion allowance over the next five years.

He also backed the idea that the in-

vestment credit for business be raised.

"If business is happy, if business is prosperous, if there's incentive for business to develop and build and put in new machinery," Johnson bubbled, his face lighting up, "it's going to create new jobs, don't you see. And I'm for it."

Johnson then moved on to his concern for students and his votes in that area. Congress has just passed a bill to establish several major diabetic research centers, Johnson said, and he's working to have the Hershey Medical Center selected as one of them.

On veterans' education, Johnson pointed to his support of a recently passed bill raising benefits by 23 per cent and extending the benefit period from 36 to 45 months.



Photos by Eric Felack

## The challenger's campaign



Photos by Ed Oelomb

*"I think I am the candidate of the little guy versus the candidate of big business, pure and simple," says Democrat Yates Mast.*

By STEVE AUERWECK  
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One thing is very clear: Yates Mast does not want Albert Johnson back in Congress. Not at all.

"I think I am the candidate of the little guy versus the candidate of big business, pure and simple," Mast says. Talk with this large, almost rotund, ruffled man some more and you'll hear a lot more about the little guy.

And why not? As the Democratic challenger for the 23rd Congressional District seat, Mast is indeed "the little guy." The district is heavily Republican, and Republican incumbent Albert Johnson has been easily re-elected in each election since his first victory in 1963.

But, no matter what other problems the voters may have in this election, they can't say there's no difference between the Congressional candidates. A 90-minute interview with Mast ranged from tax loopholes and Congressional reform to marijuana and abortion, and Mast landed at the opposite end of the spectrum from Johnson on almost every issue.

On inflation, Mast favors extensive tax revision which would eliminate many exemptions for the wealthy and lighten the tax load for the working man.

While Johnson stresses "fiscal responsibility" to cut down the national debt, Mast said that "is not nearly as important as Albert would make it out to be."

He did, however, offer a number of suggestions for cutting back the federal budget. While he stressed that the figures were guesswork, Mast said he believes \$10-20 billion can be pared from the defense budget and \$25 billion in waste can be eliminated, while the tax reforms would provide \$25 billion more to spend.

He said the money gained should be diverted to human need programs to spur the economy.

Mast also dismissed a pending tax reform bill and a new Congressional budget control committee, two of Johnson's main remedies, as "band-aid" measures.

"I believe in the Keynesian theory," he said. "You've got to keep a flow of money in the hands of the working people in this country, because they will spend and that will keep the economy going."

Putting inflation second to the risk of a serious depression, Mast also suggested making more loans available to small businessmen and encouraging farmers to increase production.

But the former tax lawyer for the U.S. Treasury Department rejected President Ford's suggestion that the capital gains tax

should be lowered and the investment credit decreased to stimulate more jobs.

"Though most of the loopholes have some rational basis behind them, the truth is that 70 per cent of them really end up in the pockets of the very wealthy and do not stimulate capital expansion," Mast said.

With an eye toward providing more jobs, Mast flatly opposed the oil depletion allowance, on the grounds that much of the money gained is being invested in foreign countries, and favored higher tariffs to prevent the outflow of jobs.

He also offered one more highly unique plan. "I've been thinking very seriously that we should join the Common Market," Mast said. "I think pressure must be brought on the Arab countries to stop this tremendous flow of billions of dollars out of the country." He said he is certain the United States would be allowed into that European alliance.

To cut back on oil use Mast went along with Ford's request that pollution restrictions be lessened to allow burning more coal.

"Pollution and ecology is a matter of balance," he said. "You can't go overboard and destroy the economy."

Johnson's campaign has been hinged on the importance of 11 years' seniority in Congress, but Mast lashed out at this as "absolutely not important," particularly with respect to Johnson's two committees.

"Banking and Post Office have very little to do with the needs of the people of this district," Mast said with outrage in his voice. "I am convinced that he has been representing Wall Street, and this isn't Wall Street, that's all there is to it."

Mast also criticized Johnson as being ineffective on those committees, saying Johnson never writes bills or does anything to set them up.

He favored complete abolition of the Congressional seniority system.

The interview touched on another main point of contention in the campaign, that of district offices.

Last year Johnson spent \$115,000 of the \$194,000 available for staff salaries and has only one office instead of the three the government will fund.

Mast has attacked this as an example of the lack of contact Johnson has with the 10,000-square mile district, and has promised to open four or five district offices. Johnson responded by saying that he wants to save the people money and that paying extra offices would mean going to vested interests.

Mast disagrees. "I don't mind paying a little rent," he said. "If the government pays for three I could certainly pay for two

more in cheap storefronts."

He added that he plans to hire a large staff at lower-than-average salaries, opening his office to beginners who are eager for the chance to be administrative assistants.

"The people of my district are certainly going to get their \$194,000 worth," he said.

At a Chamber of Commerce breakfast Friday, Mast had criticized Johnson for being given a 10 per cent rating by the National Council of Senior Citizens on a number of key votes. He elaborated on several, including:

— the Consumer Protection Agency. While Johnson opposed the controls the proposed agency would have over other government bodies, Mast said he believes in class action suits brought for the people on a government level.

— aid to mass transit. Calling Johnson negligent, Mast said mass transit is needed in Centre County as much as in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. He cited the problems of older people who can't drive or are sick and said it would help the fuel crisis.

— raising the minimum wage. Mast even favored government subsidies to small businessmen if necessary, saying, "It's about time the little guy gets a bit of this roundabout welfare as well as the big corporations."

— a legal services corporation. "Absolutely, it's a must," Mast said. "We have no justice if money is the criteria of being represented in court." Mast has served as Penn State's student legal adviser.

As he leaned back with his feet on the desk and an open collar, Mast also discussed three issues which are important to students.

On marijuana, Mast said he would go along with the Shafer Commission recommendation that simple use and possession be decriminalized.

"People's lives shouldn't be ruined for small amounts," he said.

But, he noted, "I think anybody's foolish who has to take chemicals to get themselves hyped up when they could use their brain."

Mast said he is opposed to abortions on religious and moral grounds, but he also opposed government restrictions. "I'll never get pregnant, no matter what I do," he noted in explaining why he believes he has no right to interfere.

Mast also favored raising veterans' education benefits to the equivalent of the level which he received following World War II. This means full payment of tuition and school expenses, plus an additional living allowance.

**Editor's note: this is the second of three sets of interviews with candidates running in next month's general elections. Tomorrow: interviews with state Sen. Joseph Ammerman and his rival, Republican J. Alvin Hawbaker.**