



Chloe Elmer/Colegian

United State's Rep. Joe Sestak spoke to College Democrats in the HUB on Thursday night about his Senate campaign.

Sestak advocates Senate leadership

By Brendan McNally
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER



ONLINE

To view a video of Sestak's question and answer session, visit: psucollegian.com

Congressman and Senate candidate Joe Sestak, D-Delaware County, promised new, energetic leadership in the Senate during his visit to Penn State on Thursday, stressing the need to pass important economic, health, and education initiatives.

In a meeting with Penn State College Democrats, held in 129A HUB-Robeson Center, the retired Navy admiral said he would bring leadership to the Senate that could provide the change that democrats promised in the 2008 campaign.

"What is absent down there is true leadership," he said of the democratically controlled Senate. Sestak is running in the democratic primary against incumbent Senator Arlen Specter.

In an interview, Sestak highlighted his attempts to bring down the cost of college education, citing bills he sponsored in the House that would bring transparency to college tuition increases and lower interest rates on student loans.

Both of those bills passed the House but died in the Senate, Sestak said. He vowed to move those bills through the Senate if elected. He said he "fought" to be on the House Education Committee, because his experience in the Navy showed him the importance of investing in higher education.

"In the Navy, I learned to invest

in your sailors," he said, a principle Sestak said holds true in education, as well.

Among the audience of about 60 people were some individuals frustrated with what they saw as a lack of leadership in government, particularly among democrats.

"We're seeing more and more the Democratic Party looking like a herd of cats," said David Peery, an 80-year-old veteran of the Air Force who was in attendance.

Peery said he hoped Sestak's military background could contribute to improved leadership in the Senate.

Penn State student and National Guardsman Giovanni Mendoza (junior-political science) said Sestak's military background convinced him that Sestak could bring strong leadership to the Senate.

The congressman also said he wanted to pay back Americans for the good healthcare he received in the Navy by passing healthcare reform.

In closing, Sestak pushed his pledge for strong leadership.

"All I can promise is the hardest-working, energetic leadership. I think we need more of that," he said.

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Troupe expresses artistic side

Cultural Conversations held auditions for its new monologue act, written by PSU women.

By Chris Zook
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

A Penn State theatre troupe is getting its creative juices flowing and gearing up for another semester.

Cultural Conversations held auditions Thursday night for its series of plays and monologues that will show from March 24-28. The monologue act "Body Language," which features pieces written by women at Penn State and from State College, will return this year with new material.

An original piece about violence in Darfur and Rwanda and several other original works will join it.

Cultural Conversations tends to pick low-budget material, and the group is looking for a special and specific kind of audition, said

Susan Russell, the theatre professor who oversees the project.

"We're looking for people who engage intellectually, emotionally," she said. "We ain't playin'."

The organization also functions as a way to "give playwrights a chance," Reagan Copeland (junior-theatre and English) said.

Copeland, the group's student artistic associate, said the group's ability to operate on a low budget is what allows it to show themes and pieces "not normally shown" by other troupes.

Because the plays and monologues are so low-key, the group only expects a small turnout for the event.

Auditions for the play series were short and intense. Besides reciting monologues, Cultural Conversations hopefuls also had to sing.

The organization puts on a themed play festival each year. Copeland said, adding even though "Body Language" is performed at Penn State, she hopes it will catch on with other troupes.

"We are definitely trying to get the monologues to spread as a

"All art should stir peoples' thinking. Art should question."

Sarah Lutz
senior - theatre

conversation starter," she said.

Sarah Lutz (senior-theatre) said she was attracted to the play series because it has a strong theatrical importance.

She was also drawn to the audition because it features new pieces, she said.

"I enjoy performing new works," she said. "I'm really interested in how it turns out."

The intellectual side of the play series also caught Lutz's attention, she said.

"The topics are really interesting," she said. "All art should stir peoples' thinking. Art should question."

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Commission talks more West End

By Evan Trowbridge
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The State College Borough Planning Commission hit another hurdle Thursday night in its attempts to create a revitalized version of the West End of State College, the area located west of Atherton Street.

A public announcement was made yesterday to residents in Ferguson Township, located West of State College Borough, of a new "Terraced Street-Scape District."

Ferguson Township would allow buildings that are up to twice as high as recommended by the State College Planning Commission.

The commission was visibly frustrated at how the plan could impact the neighborhood atmosphere that the commission has been trying to establish, rather than allowing another Beaver Canyon that Ferguson

Township's plan could add a commercially developed bookend.

"I think a ten story building would impact everyone and the vistas and the views," said Commission Member Cynthia Carpenter.

Ferguson Township resident John Simbock, who attended the meeting, said Ferguson Township will be holding another meeting on Jan. 18 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Ferguson Township Building to hear public comments on the issue.

"This needs some serious reading," Simbock said, referring to the plans.

"This makes my head spin when I try to read this."

Another issue the commission addressed was the plan for an addition to the Centre House, a building run by Housing Transitions, Inc. that provides shelter and food for homeless persons and people in crisis. Centre House, located at 217 E. Nittany Ave., is open 24 hours a

day and does not charge any fees for shelter.

The addition to the house will provide four new office spaces and eight new bedrooms.

Although Carpenter made a motion to recommend the building addition's plan, no member seconded the motion and it failed to receive a recommendation. Although the Centre House addition does not need to receive a recommendation from the planning commission, it does need to be approved by the borough's staff.

"Obviously, we are going to approve it once all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed," Zoning Officer Herman Slaybaugh said.

Dan Willis, the addition's architect, said that he expects the addition to be approved within the week and for construction to begin early this summer.

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