

NEWS IN BRIEF

NRA endorses Toomey in Senate race

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — The National Rifle Association is endorsing Republican Pat Toomey in the race for U.S. Senate over Democrat Joe Sestak.

The NRA said in a statement Tuesday that it endorsed Toomey because he had an outstanding record of supporting gun rights while serving in the U.S. House from 1999 to 2005.

NRA officials also held endorsement events Tuesday with Toomey in Pittsburgh, Clarks Summit and York.

While he was in Congress, Toomey supported bills to limit lawsuits against gun manufacturers and to repeal the District of Columbia's gun ban.

Sestak, a second-term U.S. House member from the Philadelphia suburbs, lost points with the NRA for supporting a failed effort to renew the assault weapons ban and for receiving an endorsement from New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

CALENDAR AND EVENTS

Alan Robock of Rutgers University will speak at 11:15 a.m. in 529 Walker Building. The event is hosted by the Earth and Environmental Systems Institute. Call 814-865-0478 for more information.

Penn State professor Michael Hickner will speak on "Liquid-like Conductivity in a Solid Polymer: Features of Fast Ion Conduction," at 2:30 p.m. in 102 Chemistry Building. The event is hosted by Scott Phillips of the Department of Chemistry. Call 814-867-2502 for more information.

Alan Robock of Rutgers University will speak on "Smoke and Mirrors: Is Geoeengineering a Solution to Global Warming?" at 3:30 p.m. in 112 Walker Building. The event is hosted by the Department of Meteorology. Call 814-863-8566 for more information.

Brian Baldo of the University of Wisconsin will speak on "Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice: Observations on the Telencephalic Control of 'Non-Homeostatic' Feeding" today at 4 p.m. in 108 Wartik Laboratory. For more information call 814-865-6519.

LUNCH

Findlay, Pollock, Redifer and Warnoc: cream of tomato soup, hearty vegetarian chili, chicken spinach, chicken spinach strawberry salad, grilled cheese sandwich, grilled cheese sandwich on whole wheat, grilled ham and cheese sandwich, rice, Thai shrimp and vegetable stir, baby carrots with dill, Italian green beans, fresh baked chocolate chip cookie, Mandarin oranges, Rice Krispie treat, swirl pudding, whipped topping

Simmons: pasta e fagioli, Greek beef sandwich, roasted vegetable whole wheat pizza, taco bar toppings, three cheese whole wheat pizza, vegan taco, zucchini ribbon penne with chicken, broccoli with caramelized onions and pine nuts, corn, grilled eggplant, Israeli cous cous and mushroom pilaf, jasmine rice with edamame, Simmons mashed redskins, whole baby carrots, cherry gelatin parfait, chocolate chip cookie

Waring: lunch roll basket, minestrone soup, soup of the day, chicken spinach, strawberry salad, baby carrots with dill, beef gravy, chicken cosmo, chicken cosmo not feature grilled chicken sandwich, grilled chicken breast, Italian green beans, quarter pound cheeseburger, quarter pound hamburger, shepherd's pie, shoestring fries tai shrimp & vegetable stir, breadsticks, cheese pizza, macaroni & cheese, meat sauce penne pasta plus, sweet onion pizza, tortellini and vegetables, baked potato, barley potato, barley pilaf, broccoli florettes, cheese sauce, hearty vegetarian chili, vegetarian burger, fresh baked chocolate chip cookie, Mandarin oranges, Rice Krispie treat, swirl pudding, whipped topping

DINNER

Findlay, Pollock, Redifer and Warnoc: cream of tomato soup, hearty vegetarian chili, BBQ sauce, chicken fritters, ginger sesame tofu chicken breast, honey mustard, honey sauce, island grilled fish, sweet & sour sauce, baby carrots with dill, cauliflower with parsley, Italian potatoes, chocolate mint brownie, pineapple chunks, walnut brownie

Simmons: fresh fish with pineapple salsa, bruschetta chicken parmesan, channa saag eggplant & tomato pasta, grilled chicken breast, zucchini corn quesadilla, broccoli with caramelized onions and pine nuts, corn, grilled eggplant, Israeli cous cous and mushroom pilaf, jasmine rice with edamame, Simmons mashed redskins, whole baby carrots, cherry gelatin parfait, chocolate chip cookie

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Films put spotlight on U.S. education

Educational professionals hope four new documentaries can help raise awareness.

"Educators know this isn't working for the kids, and they don't feel empowered to make a difference."

Vicki Abeles filmmaker

By Christine Armario ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITERS

The troubles of the U.S. education system are getting a big screen close-up.

There are no fewer than four education documentaries scheduled for release by the end of this year, including "Waiting for 'Superman,'" a poignant look at the lives of five children hoping to escape the dismal outcome of students at neighborhood public schools by winning entrance to a successful charter.

The film by Davis Guggenheim, the Oscar-winning director of "An Inconvenient Truth," already has created a stir in education circles and opened in New York and Los Angeles Friday.

Educational professionals hope the films will do for education what "An Inconvenient Truth" did for the environmental movement by putting a much-needed spotlight on the failures of schools in America.

"In the education reform world, for the last 15 years, people have been saying, 'We need a movie, like a big movie, to come along and tell people what is really going on,'" said Joe Williams, the president of Democrats for Education Reform. "Now in one year we've got more than we can handle."

Also on the list for red carpet treatment: "Race to Nowhere," created by a mother-turned activist upset at a high-stakes test culture in public education; "The Lottery," which profiles four Harlem children hoping to win a slot at a charter school; and "Lunch Line," a look at the history of school lunch.

Detractors say the films, in particular "Waiting for 'Superman'" and "The Lottery," provide overly simplified viewpoints that hold charter schools up as a universal solution and paint teachers and unions as enemies to change.

"I'm afraid our members will

think they're demonizing us," said John Wilson, executive director of the 3.2 million member National Education Association. "They're judging us by the worst of us, instead of the best of us. For our members, it's not going to be that uplifting."

Education reformers and filmmakers like Guggenheim and Vicki Abeles' from "Race to Nowhere" say the unions have had years to improve education with little success, as test scores lag nationally and high school dropout rates dominate.

"Educators know this isn't working for the kids, and they don't feel empowered to make a difference. The film is doing a tremendous job of empowering people," said Abeles, who lives in Lafayette, California.

Her documentary focuses on the health problems school children have because of stress at school, from stomachaches to depression to drug abuse.

Abeles decided to make the film after she saw her own three children suffer physically as they plowed through four or five hours of homework each night after coming home from soccer practice or play rehearsal.

She advocates for parents and schools to reduce how much homework children are given and to help kids focus on being children rather than little adults with resumes.

"Everyone expects us to be superheroes," one student says in the film.

National experts say the films are symptomatic of a culture where young professionals who worked for Teach For America or other organizations that place newly minted college graduates in inner-city schools are having their own children. They see the disparities between what their kids have and what they saw

when they were teaching.

"I think a lot of really bright, smart, creative people have gotten involved in the problems of urban education and they are willing to take a fresh look at how to solve the problems," said Richard Lee Colvin, executive director of Columbia University's Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media.

"I think that's really the heart of it."

"Waiting for 'Superman'" opens with Guggenheim reflecting on his decision to send his children to a private school in Los Angeles.

As they drive to class each day, the family passes by three public schools.

Parents believe in the idea that every child should get a great education, Guggenheim says.

"And then when it comes time to choose a school, your priorities shift," Guggenheim said at a recent screening at the Toronto Film Festival.

"You go to this place of, I will do anything for my kid, and you don't care what it is."

The film follows Daisy, a driven Los Angeles fifth-grader who dreams of becoming a doctor or a nurse; Anthony, of Washington, D.C., who wants to study and escape the path that led his father to a fatal drug addiction; Bianca and Francisco, both from struggling New York City neighborhoods but who have determined, relentless parents; and Emily, a middle-school student from Silicon Valley who worries about getting into college.

Each places their future in the hope that they will get into a high-performing charter school, which have public funding but their own set of rules.

High demand means there isn't a seat for everyone.

Students are picked in a lottery.

Rally

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improving the economy through job creation to reforming health care and changing how student loans are handled, Biden touched on many of the goals that have become identifiable with the Democratic party.

"We have to leave your generation with a sturdier economy," Biden

said. "An economy that's built on innovation."

It was not political jargon, but rather personal stories of experiencing the financial strain of putting his three children through college and graduate school that made Biden's speech memorable for AJ Logan.

"It was uplifting and informative," Logan (junior-mechanical and nuclear engineering) said. "His own stories were inspirational."

Connor Mariani said he skipped

class to hear Biden speak, but felt it was worth it for the experience of seeing an important national figure in person. Mariani (freshman-division of undergraduate studies) said he hopes his fellow students actually heed the vice president's message.

"You come to Penn State and have all these influential people come here to speak to us," Mariani said. "I just hope people get involved."

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Protest

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administration knows that we're not a voting bloc that are just going to blindly follow them off a cliff," he said. "We're not someone to count on for votes and then cast aside for four years."

YAF member Lauren DeRoo echoed Settle's statements, saying the upcoming elections will probably reflect that students are disappointed with the progress of the Obama administration.

"People voted for Obama because

he was a pop culture icon," DeRoo (sophomore-political science) said. "And we haven't seen any reason to believe he's 'The One.'"

On issues such as unemployment, rising tuition rates and addressing healthcare reform, Settle said President Barack Obama and Vice President Biden have not put enough of an emphasis on the problems facing young adults.

Settle and DeRoo said the feedback they received from other students was mostly positive — DeRoo said she was surprised she didn't get into any "battles" with political opponents.

But some students, including Genna Mott, said she wasn't entirely happy to see the YAF table set up outside of the Biden rally.

Though the YAF demonstration didn't take an aggressive approach or create any chaos, Mott (sophomore-chemistry) said she still didn't think it was an appropriate way to welcome a national leader to campus.

"It wasn't too much, but it was still inappropriate for the situation," she said. "Especially when someone like the vice president is coming."

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Overflow

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speech from the auditorium on a live video feed from FOX News' website.

A Democratic National Committee (DNC) official said students and community members had been enthusiastic about Biden's visit from the beginning, and event organizers were prepared for the possibility of an overflow situation.

Biden even addressed the group in the auditorium during his speech in Alumni Hall — assuming they could hear him.

But ongoing technical difficulties prevented those in the overflow room from hearing or seeing the speech.

Instead, attendees watched FOX News, soap operas and the occa-

sional children's cartoon on a projection screen for about an hour and a half while officials tried to sort out the situation.

A DNC official said most of the crowd stuck around despite the technical glitch.

Their patience was rewarded when Secret Service members eventually set up a small rope line behind Heritage Hall so the group in the overflow room could meet the vice president.

Biden was met with cheers of "We are... Penn State!" and applause before he launched into a mini-stump speech as cameras flashed and students stood on tiptoes to catch a glimpse of him.

"Reports of the death of our party are premature," he said, adding that President Barack Obama's administration inherited a "godawful situation."

He told students they helped send Obama to the White House in 2008 and could be a force to be reckoned with in the upcoming midterm elections if they decide to vote.

Attendees said they were happy Biden took the time to speak with them after the speech.

"Initially, I was really disappointed, but it turned out for the best," Elisa Paul (freshman-mechanical engineering) said.

Her ENGL 030 (Honors Freshman Composition) professor had cancelled class so students could attend the speech.

"I really enjoyed listening to the short speech he did give. It was nice he gave us an overview of everything he said because we missed it," she said.

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Lady Icers

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amazing feeling and there are no words to describe it. Everyone dreams big and I always wanted to represent the United States and now I finally got my chance."

This marks the first time the U.S. will send a women's team to the biannual event. The games will take place Jan. 27 to Feb. 6. The U.S. team is comprised of players from collegiate ice hockey teams affiliated with the ACHA.

When Stroemel heard he would also be the first coach in the event's history, he could not hide his emotions.

"I was extremely happy," Stroemel said. "This was a position I applied for and being able to become the first coach is a huge honor and a big chance for women's hockey.

Getting a chance to represent the United States overseas is incomparable."

Eleven different states are represented on the U.S. roster, with seven players coming from Michigan. All members of the team were selected following the USA Hockey Winter World University Games Evaluation Camp during August in Michigan.

Rossi, who has both collegiate and international experience, competed in Europe last season as a member of the select team and said her experience was invaluable. Rossi said it was her first time leaving the country and she was able to open her eyes and see different cultures from the other countries.

Though representing the United States, Stroemel will also represent Penn State while in Turkey. Stroemel has been proud of the progression and growth of women's hockey in Happy Valley.

"Penn State has been great in terms of recognition of the program," Stroemel said. "We have grown in the past years and it will be good to see where we stand at the international level."

If the women's team begins to struggle, Stroemel can count on Rossi to help pick up the team. Rossi feels she has enough positive qualities and skills to help her team win the tournament.

Rossi said she hopes to become the leader of this team and will be the backbone of the team giving them support to get through.

Though it's the women's first time competing, Stroemel has only one goal for the tournament.

"We intend to win the gold medal," he said. "If we come home and just competed, then we will not be satisfied."

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