

Mundy

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before the state House of Representatives.

A Democrat and resident of Kingston, Mundy was a manager at Injection Molding in Laffin, having worked her way up from a secretary-receptionist to that position, for 10 years before being elected. She is the single mother of a 21-year-old son, a senior economics major at the University of Pittsburgh.

Mundy was elected in 1990, when she faced incumbent Scott Dieterick, who withdrew from the race in mid-October. "I've always been interested in politics," she said. "My favorite class in high school was Problems of Democracy."

She has brought experience as a volunteer in various community organizations to her position. Among the groups she worked with were Volunteers for Literacy, the Domestic Violence Service Center, the Junior League and the League of Women Voters, of which she was president for four years.

Her three main commitments are education, environmental quality and governmental reform. Mundy currently serves on the House education, health and welfare, professional licensure and majority policy committees.

Although Mundy supports the right of parents to send their children to the public or private school of their choice, she feels that the parents should support their choices with their own money. The tuition voucher system defeated in the House last year was faulty and totally unacceptable, she said.

"The tuition voucher program would have cost the state \$300 million," she said. "The Internal Revenue Service told us that they would have counted the vouchers as taxable income. The state would have had to raise taxes to fund the educational voucher system, only to have part of that money go directly to the federal government."

Improving the educational system to train a skilled, employable work force will also help to attract business, industry and new jobs to the area, she said.

"Realistically, the only way way to create jobs is to create a demand for them, by keeping taxes as low as possible so that people have more money to spend," she said.

"We should support the Industrial Resource Center, the Small Business Development Center and the Governor's Response Team, which are all interested in attracting new businesses. As a former businesswoman, I also think that we should expand the area's manufacturing base," she said.

Mundy has also co-sponsored a package of four bills to reform the welfare system and help to break the dependency cycle often seen in families receiving public assistance.

"These bills will help to remove the disincentives for welfare recipients to return to work," she said.

Mundy has also co-sponsored a bill to allow 12 weeks unpaid family medical leave for cases of severe illness of the worker or a relative or the birth or adoption of a child. "People shouldn't have to choose between their jobs and their families," she said.

One of the accomplishments that Mundy is proudest of is her role in helping the Traffic Management Association to obtain federal funding for traffic lights on routes 309 and 415 in the Back Mountain. Although current Pennsylvania Department of Transportation policy will not allow federal money to be used for this purpose, Mundy convinced PennDOT to make an exception due to special circumstances: the opening of the Cross-Valley Expressway had created a "mini-interstate" bringing more traffic through the Back Mountain.

She has worked on another bill, recently enacted into law, that uses 2¢ of the tax on every pack of cigarettes to fund health care for children of working families who cannot afford health insurance.

Plans for her second term include working to improve the educational system and make it more competitive with other states and countries, reforming state government to make it more effective and efficient and preserving environmental quality.

"I like everything about my job, whether it's working with constituents, attending public hearings or working on legislation," Mundy said. She has logged about 60,000 miles on her leased car driving to and from Harrisburg and visiting constituents in her district, although the state reimburses only part of these costs. Legislators are paid back for the lease cost of their car as well as for mileage to and from the Legislature when it is in session. They are not reimbursed for mileage within their districts.

"Being an effective voice in Harrisburg for my constituents is a full-time job. The summer legislative recess is not a vacation - I spend the time meeting with constituents and researching legislation," she said.

Mundy has received support from both Democrats and Republicans, and says she likes it that way. "I don't look at the party affiliation of anyone who approaches me for help; I work with every group imaginable. And I'm proud of the support of Republican voters."

Coslett

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voting in her constituents' best interests.

"She's in Harrisburg because of circumstances," Coslett said during an interview last week, referring to the last election in 1990 when Mundy faced no real opposition after incumbent representative Scott Dieterick withdrew from the ballot.

The Republican candidate for state representative also says that because of his background, he will be different from other new legislators in Harrisburg. "I'm not going to be your typical wet-behind-the-ears new legislator," he says.

Coslett spent four years in banking before returning to college to take a law degree in 1986. Since then he has been in private practice in Kingston, and has been a solicitor for local government bodies.

Coslett believes that this experience will help him to more effectively represent the people of the district.

He also has refused campaign contributions from special interest groups, saying that he wants to avoid having anyone but his constituents claim his loyalty if elected.

"I think the system is polluted with special interest and PAC (Political Action Committee) money. When I get to Harrisburg, the only people who will have a hook on me will be the people of the 120th district," Coslett said.

Coslett said that his campaign has already refused financial contributions from the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association, McDonald's and the Pennsylvania Bankers Association.

Although he has not taken PAC money, Coslett said that he would accept money from the state Republican Committee, which does accept the contributions.

The Republican also says he will cut government waste whenever possible, even in the perquisites accorded to legislators. "People are hurting. I will fight against the 'I'm gonna get mine' attitude which some legislators have," he said.

Coslett has made a campaign issue of the leased car that Mundy drives and for which she, like all state legislators, is reimbursed.

Coslett says he will not charge the state for the cost of his car, but he will accept mileage reimbursement for its use. In addition to the cost of the car, legislators are paid for mileage to and from Harrisburg to attend sessions, but not for other mileage.

He also hopes to fight against changes to the retirement plan which representatives receive. "A legislator who serves for 14 years will receive a

\$47,000 per year pension, something which I will fight against if elected," Coslett said.

Mundy has charged that Coslett will not be a full-time legislator, since he has said that he would continue to serve some clients of his law office once elected. Coslett counters by saying that his comments were taken out of context and that he intends only to help long-time clients and even those only when the Legislature is out of session.

"I will be a full-time legislator when I am elected to go to Harrisburg," Coslett claimed.

Coslett was born and raised in Kingston and is a graduate of Wyoming Valley West High School. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh and worked in commercial banking and attended graduate school at Wilkes University before receiving a degree from Dickinson Law School in 1986.

Coslett said that he considered entering the Republican primary in 1990, but was convinced by others that he should not.

"People I spoke with at the time told me that because I and my opponent Scott Dieterick were from Kingston, it would not be in the best interest of the voters if I were to run," he said.

Coslett is concerned about other issues, particularly the economic situation in the area.

"Business creates the jobs and the government is responsible for creating a friendly environment for business," Coslett said.

High taxes on small business create a hostile environment which will not attract new business to Pennsylvania, the candidate said.

While he takes a firm stance on many issues, such as abortion and taxes, Coslett he is undecided on others. For example, he hasn't taken a position of using vouchers to compensate parents whose children attend private or parochial schools.

With knowledge of state and local government, Coslett hopes to establish himself as a candidate for the people in the district, and he feels that his message is reaching all groups. Coslett estimates that 25 percent of the members of the audience at a recent rally in West Pittston were Democrats.

Coslett believes that he will pull more Democrats than his opponent will gain Republican support. "He says that voter unhappiness with Mundy and his message are the reasons for the crossover."

"We believe that the people are attracted to the message which our campaign has to offer, that we will represent all of the people, not the special interest," Coslett said.

Questions. Editor's note: The following questions were posed identically to each candidate during interviews at The Dallas Post October 15. The candidates received no advance notice of the content of the questions.	Phyllis Mundy, Democrat	Keith Coslett, Republican
Do you support granting local school boards the right to lay off teachers for economic reasons?	No. Feels that schools aren't overstaffed, and cutting some teachers would mean larger classes, which would hurt education quality.	Yes. Believes that a school district should have the same options to deal with fiscal problems as any other public entity.
Do you support the right of parents to send their children to the school of their choice? Would you include private and parochial schools?	Supports choice but feels government shouldn't pay for private school tuition. Voted against vouchers that would have reimbursed parents whose children attend private schools.	Hasn't taken a position. Feels there are two questions; constitutionality and the cost to the state of payments to parents who send their children to private schools.
What can you do to help attract new businesses and good paying jobs to this area?	Says demand for goods and services creates jobs, so individual taxes should be kept as low as possible. Supports Small Business Development centers and other state programs. Believes a good education system is important to having a well-qualified work force. Wants to reform Workmen's Compensation system.	Feels state is "hostile" to business because of high corporate taxes. Wants rates cut, says states with lower taxes are doing better than Pennsylvania.
How would you change the welfare system to make people more self-sufficient?	Has co-sponsored package of four bills to break welfare dependency. Would give economic incentives to parents whose children stay in school, provide medical insurance to new workers until they got on a company plan, re-direct 25% of money taken from drug dealers to children's programs like Head Start and WIC.	Believes we must have a welfare system, but it was designed to be a safety net for people who really need help. Says there are already many proposals to rework system, but doesn't have a specific preference.
Assuming continued growth in the Back Mountain, what can be done to make travel on routes 309 and 415 safer and more efficient?	Helped form Traffic Management Association to study problems. Persuaded PennDOT to release \$2.5 million in federal money for more traffic lights. Currently working with PennDOT to determine demand for park-and-ride lots.	Hasn't studied the issue. No specific recommendations.
Do you support the current restrictions on abortion in Pennsylvania?	No. Believes abortion is a private issue and government shouldn't get involved. Says women and their families should be left to make decisions themselves.	Yes. Might support even more restrictions. Says there are exceptions; rape, incest, danger to mother's health.

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