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Race Prospectus – Pennsylvania 16th District

Lois Herr knows it is time to finally defeat seven-term archconservative Republican Joe Pitts in this south-central PA district.

Herr ran against Pitts in 2004 and 2006, providing him his first real opposition since 1996. In her second race, while the district was still heavily Republican, Herr raised her percentage against Pitts from 34% to 40%. Last year, President Obama received 48% of the vote, and Pitts was held to under 56% of the vote against two challengers.

Obviously, the district has undergone dramatic changes in the past two cycles (more below), Joe Pitts is tired and Lois Herr is a seasoned candidate ready to do the fundraising and political work necessary to end Pitts' career.

The District

Pennsylvania's 16th Congressional District has long been thought to be an impregnable Republican stronghold, but that has dramatically changed over the past two cycles. Since 2006, Democratic registration in the three counties in the district is up 32% (Republicans have lost over 10%). At the local level, Democrats have elected local officials in places which had been Republican for over a century.



In 2004, Bush beat Kerry by 24 points in PA-16; last year President Obama ran just three points behind McCain. Pitts' own margins have steadily decreased. The Cook Report's Partisan Voter Index (PVI) for the district has dropped from R+16 to R+8. (It is worth noting that 22 Democratic Members already represent districts with PVIs equal or worse.)

By the numbers, the district has changed from a prohibitive uphill struggle to a prospective battleground. Add to this Pitts' anemic fundraising (\$34K in 1st quarter of 2009), credible rumors of a potentially draining primary and Pitts' movement even further out of the mainstream, and 2010 is clearly the year for Democrats to take over the 16th.

The Candidates



Joe Pitts is a seven-term backbencher, despite promising to serve only five terms when he first ran in 1996. He was a rubber-stamp for leadership when the Republicans controlled the House, and has moved even further right since 2006. He is an absolutely consistent opponent of the Obama Administration, and is the long-time chair of the Republican Values Action Team, which coordinates policy with the Christian Right.

Pitts is in his 38th year as a career politician, spending 24 years in the PA House before being elected to the US House, where he has been notably ineffective.

In 12+ years in Washington (during most of which his party controlled the Congress and the Presidency), he has passed only two bills into law: one lowered fees for FDA testing of medical devices, the other renamed a post office. However, he has sponsored unsuccessful bills to research “post-abortion psychosis” and permanently repeal the estate tax.



Pitts has received ratings of 100 from National Right-to-Life, the American Conservative Union, the Christian Coalition, but 0 from the Alliance of Retired Americans, ACLU, American Public Health Association, 10 from the League of Conservation Voters, and an “F” from the National Education Association.

Lois Herr is a tenth-generation member of the Herr family, some of the original settlers of Lancaster County, the descendents of whom now number over 50,000. For over 26 years she worked in the telecommunications industry, with Bell Telephone Laboratories, AT&T, New York Telephone and NYNEX. Under President Gerald Ford, she served in the Office of Management and Budget as part of the President’s Executive Interexchange Program. Since 1993, she has served Elizabethtown College in a variety of positions—teacher, senior-level administrator, and Scholar-in-Residence.

She has also served as a member and chair of the Lancaster County Planning Commission, is a past president of the Elizabethtown Rotary Club, and served on the boards of Elizabethtown College, Lancaster Farmland Trust, the Pennsylvania Women’s Campaign Fund, and the Pennsylvania Federation of Democratic Women.

Conclusion

As a candidate and also as executive director of the Lancaster County Democratic Committee in 2007-08, Lois has helped make possible the dramatic changes in the 16th District. Lois Herr is a proven candidate who will take advantage of the changes in Pennsylvania’s 16th District to defeat Joe Pitts in 2010. Her experience, work ethic, and deep roots in the area will make the difference.

Paid for by Herr 2010, PO Box 111, Lancaster, PA 17608-0111, Lilia Nice, Treasurer. To reach the campaign by phone, call (717) 419-4209. Contributions to Herr 2010 are not tax-deductible. Corporate or union treasury contributions cannot be accepted, nor can donations from foreign nationals without permanent resident status. herr2010.com