

Philadelphia NOW

Fall/Winter 2006

October 2006

Casey vs. Santorum – So what’s the difference? (Jen Murphy)

Election Day is just around the corner and we are in a position to possibly take back both Houses of Congress as well as the Pennsylvania State House. Many of the most-watched races are right in our backyard, including the most important Senate race – Casey vs. Santorum. If we take down Rick Santorum, the third-raking Republican in the Senate, we will be sending a message that we are ready for change. At the same time, we could also pick up the Democratic majority in the Senate!

Most people understand how important this particular race is, but at the same time, many are resistant to putting much effort into electing Casey because of his public statements about the Iraq War and a woman’s right to choose. However, there are clear differences between the candidates. For instance, Casey told a group of about 300 Philadelphians at a Town

Hall meeting that he wants to work with both sides in reducing the number of unintended pregnancies. He supports public financing of contraception and family planning services, and has been very public about his support for over-the-counter emergency contraception. Santorum, on the other hand, opposes emergency contraception and has said that he supports the rights of states to ban all forms of birth control if they choose to do so! Santorum has repeatedly voted against increased spending on programs that could reduce teenage pregnancy and strongly opposes federal money for contraception. On the Iraq War, Santorum has pledged to “stay the course” and thinks that the Bush administration, including Donald Rumsfeld, is doing a good job at managing it. Casey supports a timeline for troop withdrawal and has called for Rumsfeld’s resignation.

Casey also will actively fight for an increase in the federal minimum wage, while Santorum has voted against a minimum wage increase thirteen times. Casey has a plan to increase access to healthcare, starting with uninsured children, while Santorum has actually voted to cut Medicaid benefits. On other issues, like Social Security, public education and the environment, Casey will support the same values we progressives hold. The consequences of another six years of Rick Santorum could be grave, including the possibility of a run for President or Vice President. If we get rid of him on November 7th, then perhaps Santorum will retire to his Virginia home and that will be the last we hear from him. Senator Casey from Pennsylvania sounds pretty good to me.

Jen Murphy is the Assistant Director of Philadelphians Against Santorum. Jen can be reached at 215-701-6106.

Inside this issue:

Progress Report	2
Maria Quinones Sanchez—Democratic Candidate for the 7th Councilmatic District	3
Learning from Children Effected by Incarceration	4
Our Disappearing Right to Vote	4
Neighborhood Networks on the Move!	5
Endorsements	6
Meeting Dates of Philadelphia NOW	6

Progress Report (Karen Bojar)

Under the leadership of Philadelphia NOW Vice-President Cindy Bass, our chapter held a very successful Women of Color and Allies Conference at the

the Community College of Philadelphia on March 18, 2006. The conference was attended by over 200 women and co-sponsored by the Women’s Center and Women’s

Women’s Studies Program of the Community College of Philadelphia. The conference was also supported by the Coalition of 100 Black Women, Southeast PA

Progress Report (continued)

Chapter, Congressman Chaka Fattah, Local 2187, AFSCME and the Mid-Atlantic Women's Studies Association. Congratulations to Cindy for her inspired leadership, and special thanks to Francesca Alvarado for her very valuable work reaching out to the Latina community!

The highlights of the conference included an address by Latifa Lyles, National NOW Vice-President for Membership and by Sylvia Henriquez, Director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health. The conference got off to rousing start with plenary speaker, Judge Ida Chen, and culminated in the keynote address of internationally acclaimed author, Sonia Sanchez. The conference concluded with inspirational remarks by Zenaida Mendez, NOW's Director of Racial Diversity Programs. The conference led to the strengthening of ties among various women's groups in the city and increased understanding of the issues confronting women of color.

women in prison a priority of our chapter. At our spring 2006 fundraiser, we honored women who have advocated for and provided services for women in prison: Naima Black, Community Collaborations Coordinator at the Pennsylvania Prison Society, and a group of women who have worked to strengthen ties between women prisoners and their children, "Messages from Mom". At the fundraiser, we learned that our other honoree, founding member, Florence Cohen had, among the many causes she championed, also worked to provide services to women in prison.

We continue to work in partnership with the Pennsylvania Prison society and have raised these issues in the media. (See the article on women in prison which appeared in the Daily News on 7/31/06 and can be accessed in the August archives at <http://www.philanow.blogspot.com/>)

Future plans:

hold a forum on women's issues with all candidates for mayor of Philadelphia. In 1999, Philadelphia NOW held such a mayoral forum which was reasonably successful, considering that it was an all volunteer effort. We are currently seeking support for the 2007 forum.

The greatest challenge is to formulate women's issues in such a way that they can be addressed on the municipal level. In planning for the forum, we hope to include representatives from a wide range of organizations which provide services for and/or advocate for women in prison. We also intend to follow up the forum with a meeting of those organizations involved in the planning process to develop a set of recommendations on women's issues to be presented to the next mayor. We will try to keep our members informed about our progress here by posting updates about the mayoral forum at www.philanow.blogspot.com)

"In March 2007, we hope to hold a forum on women's issues with all candidates for mayor of Philadelphia."

We have made issues involving

In March 2007, we hope to

girls.

Pictured (left to right) are Philadelphia NOW WOCA Conference Planners and two keynote speaker: **Karen Bojar, Claudette Dia Taylor, Judge Sheila Woods-Skipper, Cindy Bass, Francesca Alvarado, Sylvia Henriquez, Doris Pridgen, Latifa Lyles, Zenaida Mendez, and Anita Lewis**



Maria Quinones Sanchez—Democratic Candidate for the 7th Councilmatic District

Philadelphia and PA NOW have both endorsed Maria Quinones Sanchez for Philadelphia City Council's 7th Councilmatic District.

Maria is currently the regional director of the Puerto Rican Federal Affairs Administration. In addition, she has worked in the offices of three Democratic Party elected officials, and has worked to register thousands of new voters. As well as sitting on the board of the Pennsylvania Women's Campaign Fund, Maria has been active throughout the state as a leader in the Pennsylvania Statewide Latino Coalition (PSLC).

The 7th District called a special election on September 18 and, in spite of Maria's experience, the ward leaders chose one of

their own, Daniel Savage, to hold the council seat. Mr. Savage must run for re-election in the 2007 Primary against Maria.

> With Philadelphia NOW's participation, a growing coalition has been expressing its outrage at cronyism and "business as usual" politics. Major dailies, blogs and a number of community newspapers, have opined about such special elections in the City. The result has been terrific coverage for Maria, and the bad process of special elections in Philadelphia.

The platform of issues on which Maria is running includes:

- Stopping violence in our communities through well-funded

recreation centers, community policing, job creation and real educational and working opportunities for citizens;

- Increasing educational opportunities through extended days, weekend offerings, and smaller learning environments;

- Creating a long-term strategy for home ownership opportunities; and,

- Investing in our commercial corridors to promote more small business development..

If you want to contribute to Maria's campaign, receive e-alerts, or volunteer, visit Maria's website at www.maria2007.com.

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"With Philadelphia NOW's participation, a growing coalition has been expressing its outrage at cronyism and "business as usual" politics.



Pictured are Maria Quinones Sanchez, with her husband Tomas Sanchez and sons Tomasito and Edgar.

Learning from Children Effected by Incarceration (Naima Black)



“... ‘invisible’, ‘isolated’, and ‘forgotten’. These same words sadly ring true about children of incarcerated mothers and fathers.

The world of ‘criminal justice’ is a man’s world. ‘Correctional’ systems were designed by men with men in mind. Little or no thought was given to the specific needs of women prisoners. Criminal justice advocates often describe this rapidly increasing population as ‘invisible’, ‘isolated’, and ‘forgotten’. These same words sadly ring true about children of incarcerated mothers and fathers. Their needs and hopes are not only unmet, but largely unacknowledged. However it is indeed the experiences and perspectives of these children that should drive the work advocates pursue on their behalf

The **Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights initiative** is a national project under the direction of Dee Ann Newell, a 2006 Soros Foundation Senior Justice Fellowship recipient. The Prison Society has been selected to convene a partnership along with thirteen other collabora-

tions from across the United States to pursue effective strategies and develop a variety of approaches to implement policy reform and systemic change built around the Children’s Bill of Rights.

The Prison Society’s Working Group to Enhance Services to Incarcerated Women, the core partnership will host monthly strategic planning meetings with other organizations and public agencies interested in children and families of the incarcerated. Philadelphia NOW is supporting this initiative.

The San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership has established the following “rights” for children of incarcerated parents:

1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent’s arrest.
2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.

3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.

4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parent’s absence.

5. I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent.

6. I have the right to support as I struggle with my parent’s incarceration.

7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed, or labeled because of my parent’s incarceration.

8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.

San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership

For more information contact:
Naima Black
Pa Prison Society
215-564-4775 ext. 107
nblack@prisonsociety.org

Our Disappearing Right to Vote (Louise Francis)



The day after Election Day, 2004, we woke up to news that 1) George Bush won the election for president and 2) the night before newspaper polls had predicted a landslide for John Kerry. However, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania has put together some compelling statistics indicating that the discrepancy between exit polls and actual votes could not have happened by chance: they were evidence of

systematic, widespread problems on Election Day intended to deprive voters of their right to vote. Now, two years after the election, coverage of what probably was a tainted election is starting to appear. Robert Kennedy, Jr. wrote in Rolling Stone “Across the country, Republican election officials and party stalwarts employed a wide range of illegal and unethical tactics to fix the election. A review of the available data reveals that in Ohio alone, at least

357,000 voters, the overwhelming majority of them Democratic, were prevented from casting ballots or did not have their votes counted in 2004(12) -- more than enough to shift the results of an election decided by 118,601 votes.” (http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/10432334/was_the_2004_election_stolen) (continued on next page)

Our Disappearing Right to Vote (continued)

Shortly after the elections, Congressman Conyers convened hearings about the electoral shenanigans that took place in Ohio, and the results were published in *What Went Wrong in Ohio: The Conyers Report on the 2004 Presidential Election*. The campaign to deny voters the right to vote in Ohio began before the elections, when Secretary of State Blackwell issued arbitrary rulings intended to frustrate the effort to register voters. On election day, there were not enough voting machines in Democratic wards, where people stood on line for 5 hours in order to vote. However, machines were plentiful and lines short in Republican wards. The Republican party also engaged in a practice dubbed "caging" and were targeted at newly registered voters in minority areas. They sent registered letters to the voters, and if they refused to sign

them, the Republican operatives challenged the legitimacy of the person's right to vote. There were widespread allegations that machines had been

Moreover, minority groups such as African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans were often targeted. In South Dakota, a close senatorial race was taking place. Among the shenanigans, Republican party operatives harassed Native American voters by following them out of the polling place and writing down their license numbers and by photographing them. Flyers were circulated in white districts that said "the dogs are lining up to vote for Daschel (the Democrat)." The reference connecting "dogs" to Native Americans was related to a dispute between farmers and Native Americans over handling an

overpopulation of prairie dogs.

Activities are under way to address the problems of voting fraud and suppression. Among them are initiatives in Pennsylvania to require paper verification of the vote actually cast. It should be noted that a number of studies, including a GAO study, has found the new electronic voting machines to be error prone and subject to manipulation and security breaches. With a high profile senatorial campaign in our state, the importance of a clean and problem-free election is crucial this fall. Activists are hoping to wake the media from its slumber and get it to begin covering the issue. Check out the web site www.saveourvote.com for resources on this issue and information on how you can help

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Neighborhood Networks on the Move! (Gloria Gilman)

Neighborhood Networks is an organization that desires to motivate diverse people in every neighborhood of Philadelphia to learn about and participate in the political process from a progressive viewpoint. We are organizing on a block-by-block, neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis to get people talking to one another about what issues matter to them.

We work on issues such as minimum wage, recycling, ethics reform, healthcare for all, inclusionary housing, anti-casino, handgun control, tax policy and transit and on what-

ever other issues our members choose. We are paralleling the City's political structure by creating our own wards and divisions with locally elected leadership. We are an open system dedicated to reforming politics so that the "d" in "democratic" returns as the motivating factor in governmental policy making. We work not only on issues but to support progressive effective citizens who run for elected office.

In the short year and one half of our existence, we have begun to have an impact on Philadelphia and Harrisburg. We have a great opportunity next spring

to run and support progressive candidates for city council and other local offices. This could make a huge difference in the policies created by our city. Please consider joining this movement. It is time to overcome the malaise that has set in and not let the right and the corrupt rule our lives. This is an exciting energizing time! We have this opportunity to work from the "inside" and the "outside" at the same time to push for social change. Check out our website at phillynn.org or contact Gloria Gilman, Chair, at 215-568-4990, gmgilman@igc.org

NOW Endorsements in Philadelphia for November 2006 General Election

NATIONAL NOW PAC

Allyson Schwartz (D) 13th— (U.S. House of Representatives)

PENNSYLVANIA NOW PAC

Governor Edward G. Rendell (D)

LeAnna M. Washington (D) 4th—(PA Senate)

PA NOW PAC and Philadelphia NOW PAC

Tim Kearney (D) 172nd

W. Thomas Curtis (D) 181st

Babette Josephs (D) 182nd

James R. Roebuck, Jr. (D) 188th

Cherelle L. Parker (D) 200th

John Meyers (D) 201st

Marc Cohen (D) 202nd

Philadelphia NOW Meeting Dates:

Nov. 13

Dec. 11

Jan. 22

Feb. 12

Mar. 12

Apr. 9

May 7

Jun. 11

**Meetings are held at
1606 Walnut Street, 3rd Floor
5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**