

political notebook

NORA K. WALLACE

Candidate left feeling like 3rd wheel

S.B. News-Press OCT. - 8 1996

The Wheeler factor: Independent congressional candidate Steve Wheeler bears no physical resemblance to thwarted presidential debater Ross Perot. Wheeler's a lot taller, has more hair and doesn't quite have Perot's Texas twang.

But what the duo share is a failed attempt to participate in a televised debate. Perot's taking his case to the federal courts, after the Commission on Presidential Debates decided he would not be admitted to either debate between President Clinton and Republican challenger Bob Dole. The commission concluded the Reform Party candidate does not have a realistic chance of winning the presidency.

Wheeler, a Santa Barbaran trying to unseat Rep. Andrea Seastrand for the 22nd Congressional District seat, says he knows how Perot feels. Wheeler has repeatedly complained about what he perceives is exclusion in his role as an alternative candidate to Democratic challenger Walter Capps.

Now Wheeler is incensed at being barred from an Oct. 21 KEYT televised debate, and he's accusing the television station of "media prostitution" for its decision. He also says the Capps campaign is pulling the station's strings, alleging the Democrat is worried about Wheeler's impact on the race.

"This could be a breakthrough for me," Wheeler says of the televised debate. "With all the negative campaign ads, people are fed up with both parties. They'll be looking for options."

"If I do well in that, and I know I will, that could swing the whole thing around. I don't think I'm unrealistic about that. I really believe this is wrong."

Byron Elton, the general manager of KEYT, said the decision was purely an internal one — mainly dictated by the hour-long debate format. With six legally qualified candidates, he said, there was no way the station could conduct a "meaningful" debate with everyone.

"We opted to invite the two leading candidates; in reality the only two who have a chance," Elton said. "It has little to do with Steve Wheeler and everything to do with our ability to put on a meaningful debate."

Also in the race are Dick Porter, Reform Party; David Bersohn, Libertarian and Dawn Tomastik, Natural Law Party.

Those candidates, as well as Wheeler, have been offered an opportunity for free air time, however. These four candidates, Elton said, can each tape a two-minute, unedited spot that will air immediately following the debate.

Despite Wheeler's allegations, Capps had nothing to do with the station's decision, insists Steve Boyd, the campaign's press director. In fact, he thinks the hubbub has been "cooked up" by the Seastrand campaign.

"We're ready to face Wheeler," Boyd said Monday. "We'd like to see all the candidates there."

Boyd denies the talk that Wheeler is a threat to the Capps race, saying Dick Porter has a huge bankroll — reportedly more than \$100,000 — and represents as much of a potential vote draw as the independent.

"Neither is breaking through the 2 percent level," Boyd said. "They will not be major players in the race. I'm sure it will be a close election."

Seastrand, naturally, is siding with Wheeler, and putting the blame on Capps. They say Capps refuses to show up at debates if Wheeler is included.

In a press release last week labeled "Who's afraid of the big, bad wolf?" Seastrand, who has been targeted for defeat by numerous organizations, denounced what she called Capps' "strong arm tactics, especially in light of his pious claims to be a Jefferson Democrat and interested in an open forum on the issues. Who is Walter Capps to determine who should be heard from and who should not?"

Some of Wheeler's supporters have been calling the station, demanding that he be included. Nancy Soelberg, a San Luis Obispo human resource assistant, faxed a letter calling the action censorship.

"The voters have the right to see all sides of the big picture, not just the 'front runners,'" she wrote. "It is time to get to the bottom line and allow the voters to make educated decisions about who we elect to support us in office."

Isn't Capps a Democrat?

Santa Maria Times OCT. - 6 1996

To the Editor: I have been watching with interest the TV ads for Walter Capps.

He professes to be an independent in these ads. Is he afraid to list himself as a Democrat, or is he ashamed of the way the Democrats have been acting via their buddies, the AFL-CIO and their ads against Rep. Andrea Seastrand?

Last election, he ran with the "big dogs" and showed himself to be with the tax-and-spend liberals all the way. Is he a turncoat to the Democratic Party and disavowing their liberalism the way Bill Clinton is doing?

Fred Irvine
Santa Maria

Seastrand, Capps cry foul over vicious ads

Both fume over the other's commercials — while insisting their own are accurate.

S.B. News-Press
By NORA K. WALLACE
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER
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Although both Republican Rep. Andrea Seastrand and Democratic challenger Walter Capps have spoken about restoring the public trust in government — and of running campaigns based on issues, not sound bites — advertising in the race for the 22nd Congressional District seat seems to be defeating that intent.

The recent ads, on both sides, are being scripted with an increasingly strident, poke-in-the-nose approach. With little more than three weeks to go before the Nov. 5 election, voters' emotions, far more than their intellects, have become the target of choice.

And each side blames the other for the way things are going.

Within this increasingly hostile environment, the latest ad to elicit a cry of foul is paid for by the Seastrand campaign and is now airing on local television stations. Capps and condemned killer Richard Allen Davis are portrayed as being equally upset by the recent death sentence against Davis for the murder of 12-year-old Polly Klaas.

Although the ad has elicited condemnation from some viewers, it is another in a line of particularly pointed advertisements from both sides in the campaign that provides voters with half-truths rather than full accounts.

The current ad intones: "When Richard Allen Davis got the death penalty he rightly deserved for murdering Polly Klaas, two people were disappointed: Richard Allen

SEE CAMPAIGN
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Capps wants to restrict 2nd Amendment rights

S.B. News-Press OCT. - 9 1996

During the Los Angeles riots, gangs broke into gun stores and armed themselves. Law-abiding residents had to wait 15 days.

Judges have invalidated California's three-strikes law, claiming sole discretion to release violent offenders like the killer of Polly Klaas and the

killer of the Stockton school children over and over again.

Hand Gun Control, Inc. and congressional candidate Walter Capps want to severely tax and restrict your 2nd Amendment rights.

These are not "Saturday Night Special" laws that would only discriminate against the

poor. These are 1,000 percent taxes and regulations which are intended to evolve into total prohibition of gun ownership — brought to you by people who used to call themselves the National Coalition to Ban Handguns.

Call candidate Walter Capps and tell him that 20,000 gun laws are enough!

And ask him, How can we win the war on crime and drugs by disarming only the law abiding? Then ask him, Walter, who threw the rock?

Then call Congresswoman Andrea Seastrand and thank her for protecting your 2nd Amendment rights.

Larry R. Rankin
Santa Barbara

CAMPAIGN

Cont'd from previous page

Davis and Walter Capps. Walter Capps is against the death-penalty ... Walter Capps cares about criminals. Andrea Seastrand cares about victims."

The use of biting ads is nothing new in the world of politics, of course, particularly in a spotlighted election such as this. Nor is it uncommon for aggrieved candidates to air new ads in response, or to fax news releases to the media decrying "attacks." On Wednesday, Capps held a news conference to express his displeasure.

"It is a total misrepresentation of the way I feel about these things," Capps said. "Andrea Seastrand

knows this. She knows it's not the truth about what we stand for or why we're running."

The Seastrand campaign defends the ads, saying Capps used to oppose the death penalty, but has since changed his stance merely to please voters.

The ad, Capps counters, "is low, base, mean, mean-spirited, outrageous ... It is without foundation. It does not represent my position on the issue."

The death penalty, he said, should be used in "intense" cases, such as first-degree murder, when someone shoots a police officer or in the instance of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Will Bos, campaign manager for the Seastrand campaign, says the ads are valid, because Capps previous-

ly spoke out against the death penalty. He cited several interviews Capps gave during the 1994 race against Seastrand, in which Capps is quoted as saying he opposed the death penalty as a deterrent to crime.

"We stand by the ads," Bos said. "It has our disclaimer on it. It's a truthful ad regarding his past comments on the death penalty. When I look at his latest ad, calling Andrea Seastrand a liar, it has his imprimatur. He can't have it both ways."

Seastrand's campaign officials called Capps hypocritical for complaining about campaign ads, particularly since several special interest groups are running advertisements against Seastrand, which by association are designed to help Capps.

For months, Seastrand has lobbied for local television stations to pull advertisements paid for by the AFL-CIO. The ads speak of her voting record on minimum wage and

Medicare. One of the ads says Seastrand voted to slash Medicare, while she says her vote was one to slow the rate of spending growth.

One ad campaign, sponsored by the Sierra Club, speaks of Seastrand's environmental record, and advises voters to "dump Andrea Seastrand, before she dumps anything else on us." It superimposes her face over a picture of a drainage pipe funneling pollutants into the ocean.

But Capps says his outrage, and the news conference, were not about political issues such as the death penalty, but about "the use of a tragic situation for political gain."

Hannah-Beth Jackson, president of the Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee — which has endorsed Capps — appeared with Capps and also condemned the ad as reprehensible.

The ad, she said, debases politics, and she called for a restoration of "integrity and dignity to the politi-

cal process."

The Richard Allen Davis ad follows an immigration ad and mailer paid for by the National Republican Congressional Committee, and authorized by the Seastrand campaign. The mailer, which characterizes Capps' ideas as "dangerous," shows a picture of people running across the Mexico-U.S. border with the wording, "Liberal Professor Walter Capps' policy on illegal immigration is simple: Open the door, Let 'em in, Put them on welfare."

Capps, however, has said at forums and in his campaign literature that illegal immigration must be stopped, but not at the expense of legal immigration.

"If Walter Capps wants to complain against negative ads, he's misplaced his ire," Bos said. "He should place a phone call to the AFL-CIO, who have been running negative and false ads for eight months. He's not said word one about their ads."

Seastrand tries to follow in Lagomarsino's footsteps

By Ken Miller
Times Staff Writer

Santa Maria Times
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Once the incessant television advertising and campaign rhetoric stops and the celebrities who trade their names and talents for fund-raising dollars go back to Hollywood, Rep. Andrea Seastrand must stand on her own merits.

Direct service to constituents is one of the truest measures of an elected official's chances of returning to office, and will undoubtedly be one of Seastrand's biggest strengths — or weaknesses — at the polls Nov. 5.

In one way, Seastrand, R-Pismo Beach, is at a disadvantage, since one of her predecessors, Bob Lagomarsino, set the bar high on constituent service during his 14 years in office (presidential hopeful Bob Dole, on a recent visit to Santa Barbara, called Lagomarsino "one of the country's best congressmen").

But Seastrand is no novice when it comes to interacting with her voters. Her political experience goes back to 1990 when she ran for and won the 33rd

ELECTION 1996



A Microcosm of
American
Politics

District Assembly seat after her husband, former Assemblyman Eric, died of cancer.

Seastrand has had six years to prove she cares about the needs of her constituents, and many feel she has succeeded, sometimes beyond the call of duty.

Arturo Zamora, 25, a Mexican immigrant, had been trying to get his green card for more than a year, but was continually given the run-around by the U.S. Immigration Office in Los Angeles.

"Immigration doesn't listen to you, they ignore you, and they're pretty rude," Zamora said. "I wrote to them a lot, every month a letter to them, and they

Seastrand, Capps to
meet in head-to-
head debates. See
schedule page A-5.

never answered them back."

Zamora finally decided to try giving Seastrand's office a call.

"I filled out some forms, and as soon as I talked to her, she sent a letter to Immigration," Zamora said. "After 30 days, I got my green card."

Zamora said he was especially impressed by Seastrand's assistance because he cannot legally vote until he becomes an American citizen.

"If I could vote for her, I would," he said. "I put her in high standards, because I think she really cares."

Others feel strongly in the opposite regard.

Santa Barbara resident David Diaz said he has clashed with Seastrand's office on many issues, most of them centering on Los Padres National Forest and the Forest Service's conduct.

Diaz claims certain roads which get closed due to flooding remain closed much longer than they have to, and that Lagomarsino got the roads open immediately when called by his constituents.



"I can't find enough to say about her. They don't have to do those kinds of things for individuals. They can put you on the back burner"

Alberta Drake
on Rep. Andrea
Seastrand,
above

See SEASTRAND. Cont'd to next page